7-7-4

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

BX7231

Chap. ..... Copyright No. .....

Shelf. P8

1840

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

To be deposited in the
Clerks Office

D. S. Rec.d 8th Apl. 1841.

No. 1122.

Deposited Feb. 5th 1841
Recorded Vol. 15. Page 178.

A

VIEW

OF

CONGREGATIONALISM.

BY

GEORGE PUNCHARD,

PASTOR OF THE CONG. CHURCH, PLYMOUTH, N. H.

With an Introductory Notice,

BY R. S. STORRS, D. D.

17/1736a

SALEM:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN P. JEWETT.

NEW YORK: GOULD, NEWMAN & SAXTON.

1840.

BX7231
P8
1840

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1840, by
JOHN P. JEWETT,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Massachusetts.

4295

TO

JOHN PUNCHARD, Esq.

SALEM, MASS.

MY AGED AND REVERED PARENT,

WHOSE INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE FIRST TAUGHT ME THE VALUE OF THE SYSTEM HERE ADVOCATED,—THESE PAGES ARE RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE DESIGN of this volume is to answer the inquiry, WHAT IS CONGREGATIONALISM?

It contains a brief discussion of the principles on which Congregational and Calvinistic Baptist churches are organized; a statement and defence of their doctrines respecting church order and discipline; an enumeration and explanation of their ecclesiastical practices; and a consideration of some of the advantages of their church polity.*

No one can be more sensible of the difficulty of executing such a plan, than the writer now is; had he been equally so before he undertook the task, it might have saved both him and his readers the trouble of this preface.

An apology for the work may, perhaps, be found in its history. About three years since, the writer was appointed, by the Clerical Association of which he is

* The Baptists differ, somewhat, in their ecclesiastical practices, from what is usually denominated the Congregational order; but, in their general principles of church order and government, the two denominations are identified.

a member, to prepare a dissertation upon Congregationalism. This he was requested to publish. But, though the result of considerable reading and reflection, it was regarded by him as too immature to be offered to the public. A renewal of the request of the Association, at their next meeting, induced the author to re-write the essay, and to preach the substance of it to the people of his charge. The re-writing of it, swelled the essay into six or eight sermons. The unsolicited opinion of several intelligent parishioners, who were ignorant of the doings of the Association, led to the belief that the substance of the discourses might prove acceptable to the denomination generally. A revision was accordingly begun. This revision led to a further examination of authorities, a multiplication of topics, a more extended range of discussion, and ultimately, to the decision to submit this volume to the judgment of the public.

The work has been written not for the wise, nor for those, exactly, who are simple ; but for that large class of persons who occupy the intermediate space between the learned and the ignorant.

The English reader will occasionally find a word or phrase in Latin or Greek ; but rarely unaccompanied with a translation, and never, it is believed, in such a position as to break the sense of the sentence.

It is no part of the writer's design to make war upon the opinions of others. He has spoken freely—he has felt constrained so to do—though it is hoped kindly, of those from whom he differs.

That the writer has fallen into no errors, is more than can be reasonably expected; but, he has certainly used his utmost care to avoid them. That the opinions expressed in these pages may not be modified, in some particulars, by further investigation, is by no means impossible; but, as they now appear, they are not the offspring of haste, nor—it is confidently believed—of prejudice.

The Appendix contains several articles, both original and selected, of considerable importance to the illustration of the general subject.

Adopting the language of the learned and excellent Samuel Mather, in his "Apology for the Liberties of the Churches in New England," the author commends his labors to the favor of the churches and to the blessing of God:—"I am far from assuming anything of authority to myself in the following sheets. If I have collected the sense of others right, and well epitomized their thoughts, which are variously dispersed, and reduced them to a clear and natural order, I shall think it sufficient."

Plymouth, N. H. July, 1840.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

Church Polity defined. How regarded under the Mosaic Dispensation—On the introduction of Christianity. Simplicity of order, the distinctive peculiarity of the first Christian churches, page 1. The estimation of this subject by the Reformers of the 16th century. Impediment to a thorough reform of the polity of the church, in those days, 2. The subject not much attended to, until the latter part of the 16th or the early part of the 17th century, 3. The interest felt by the Puritans; especially by the fathers of New England, 4. Present indifference among Congregationalists. Causes: I. Anxiety to promote the union of different denominations in benevolent enterprises, 4. No denominational organizations to promote Congregationalism, 6. II. Influence of Theological Seminaries, 7. III. A false, but prevalent impression, that it is unnecessary to make direct efforts to promote Congregational views, 8. IV. The dearth of books upon the subject, 8. Note, Proposed history of the denomination, 10.

PART I.

PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

A distinction made between principles and doctrines, page 11. Congregationalism defined, 12. Principles of the system: I. *The Scriptures are the only infallible guide to church order and discipline*, 13. Necessity of this. Note, Dr. Campbell's admission, 14. Consequences of denying this principle, 15. The character of the apostolic churches explains the New Testament meaning of the word Church, 16. Constitution of the Christian church designed to be permanently the same, 17. The objections, that our circumstances are unlike those of the primitive Christians; and, that the present prosperous state of the church, requires a more attractive exterior, answered, 17—19. Congregationalists thorough Protestants, 20.

II. *A church is a voluntary association of professing Christians, united by covenant, for the worship of God and the celebration of religious ordinances*, 21. Correctness of this principle proved from the Scriptures, 22—27.

III. *A church should ordinarily consist of only so many as can conveniently assemble together*, 28. Scripture testimony upon this point. Provincial churches unknown to the apostles, 29. Milner's objection, founded on the supposed numbers in some of the primitive churches, answered, 30, 31. Slater's representations, corrected, 31—36. Episcopalian admissions, 36. Inference from these admitted facts, 37.

IV. *All ecclesiastical power in those who compose the church*, 37. Scripture testimony. Elections of officers by apostolic churches, 38. Discipline of erring members, 39, 40. Christ's directions, Matt. 18: 15—18. Congregationalists, alone, can follow these directions, 41, 42. Note, Dr. Campbell's remark on "a church representative," 43.

PART II.

DOCTRINES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

I. *There are but two orders of church officers, Elders and Deacons*, page 45. Other helpers in the apostolic churches, 46. Inspiration essential to them. Deaconesses, 47, 48. Elders, what? 49. Note, on the word "ordained" (χειροτονήσαντες) Acts 14:21—23, pp. 49, 50. Why the primitive churches had a plurality of elders, 51. Elders, the same as pastors, overseers and bishops—Proof, 52—54. The term Elder, why applied to Christian teachers, 54. Why called pastors, 55. Admissions of Bloomfield and Waddington. John Owen's remarks, 56. Dr. Campbell's remarks, 57. Deacons, original appointment of, design—a permanent office, 57—61. Ruling elders, what? Their office work described, 57. Objections considered, 62—68. Scripture testimony to the correctness of our views, 68, 69.

II. *There should be an entire ecclesiastical equality among Christian ministers*, 70. Gradations, how introduced into the ministry, 71. Views of the English reformers upon this subject, 72, note.

III. *Councils have no authority over the churches*, 72. Consociational form considered and objected to, 74. Testimony of Ecclesiastical History against it, 75—78.

IV. *The churches accountable to each other*, 78. Communion of churches, how exercised, 79. Note, illustrating the fellowship of the New England churches previous to 1648, p. 79. Concluding remarks. Why the fathers of New England loved Congregationalism, 81. A spiritual system, 83.

PART III.

TESTIMONY OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY TO THE CONGREGATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE APOSTOLIC AND PRIMITIVE CHURCHES.

This testimony corroborates our interpretation of the Scriptures, page 85. Mosheim's testimony. The supreme power in the peo-

ple, 86. The apostles acknowledged this. The people chose their own rulers and teachers. Rejected or confirmed laws. Disciplined offenders. Decided controversies. Determined the causes of presbyters and deacons. Exercised supreme power, 87. Identity of presbyters, elders, and bishops. Distinction between teaching and ruling elders, doubtful, 88. A bishop had charge of a single congregation only, during the 1st and 2d centuries. Admissions of Waddington, 89. How the character of a bishop was changed. City bishops usurped authority over country bishops. Notes, Bloomfield's explanation. Dr. Campbell on the independency of the early Christian churches, 90. Mosheim, on the same topic. All churches on an equality, 91. Deflection of the churches in the 3d century. Clergy corrupted. Minor orders added. These explained, 93. Philosophers corrupt the faith, and princes etc. the order of the church. Influence of Constantine. Assumes the supreme power over the church. Bishops encroach upon the people, 94. Church and state accommodated to each other, and united. Ecclesiastical nobles created, 95. Corrupt state of the church. Blood-shed and house-burning by rival parties for the bishopric of Rome. Choice of their bishops taken from the people, 96.

Testimony of the Apostolic Fathers. Previous representations respecting the general order, etc. of the apostolic churches corroborated. Clement, of Rome (A. D. 64—70), pp. 97—102. Testimony of Polycarp (A. D. 108—117), p. 102. Ignatius (A. D. 116). His Epistles corrupted and interpolated. Reliance on these by Episcopalians to prove the existence of three orders in the ministry, 105. His testimony favors Congregational views in several particulars, 106—110. Justin Martyr (A. D. 150). Dr. J. Owen's remarks, 111. Tertullian (A. D. 200). Cyprian (A. D. 250). Dr. Owen's proposition, viz. that for 200 years A. C. no other kind of churches existed but Congregational, 103. Character, etc. of Owen. Dr Campbell's confirmation of Owen's opinion, 114. Dr. Chauncy's collection of ecclesiastical witnesses in favor of Congregationalism, note, 115.

PART IV.

ECCLESIASTICAL PRACTICE OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

I. *Organization of Churches.* Number necessary, note, page 117.

II. *Choice and consecration of church officers*, 119. Choice of a pastor. Trial. Call. Acceptance. Ordaining council, 120. Proceedings of council. Every pastor should be a member of his own church, note, p. 121. Order of ordination services. Usages of Congregational churches in Great Britain differ somewhat from ours, note. Installation, 122. Imposing hands, early New England practice, note. Choice and consecration of deacons. Ordination of. Why neighboring churches not invited to assist, note, p. 123.

III. *The church assembled for business*, 124. Pastor moderator. Clerk, 125. Majority decide all questions. Practice in Great Britain, note, p. 126.

IV. *Admission of Members.* Candidates give a public relation of religious experience. Diversity of practice, note, p. 127. Propounding. Admission, 128.

V. *Dismission of members.* No dismissions without recommendations. Letters of introduction, note, p. 129. No private ways in or out of our churches, 130.

VI. *Dismission of a pastor.* How effected. Duty of pastor. Church. Council, 131. In case of disagreement about the matter between church and pastor, 132. Practice of English and Scotch Congregationalists, note, p. 133.

VII. *Church discipline.* Importance of it, 133. Rule, Matt. 18 : 15—18, explained, 134. Shall private steps be *always* taken? 135 and note. Final action of the church. Restoration of an excommunicated person. What are disciplinary offences? 136. Christian watchfulness a duty, 137.

VIII. *Discipline of pastors.* In the hands of the church, 137. Councils usually called. Mutual or ex parte. Doctrine of Cambridge Platform. Reason for councils, 138.

IX. *Who shall complain of offenders?* If private, the first to whom the offence is known. If public, one of the deacons, or other experienced person. Every church member bound to see that the regular course is taken, 140. Discipline should not be hurried, 141.

X. *Discipline of sister churches.* Congregational churches members of one family—Acknowledge their accountability to each other. Doctrine of Cambridge Platform, 141. Procedure in the discipline of an erring sister church, 142. Claim no power to disband erring churches. Withdraw fellowship after the regular steps have been taken without success, 143.

XI. *Minor points on which Congregationalists differ among themselves.* E. g. Raising the salaries of their pastors. By tax on property or pews, by weekly contributions, or yearly subscriptions, etc. etc. All Congregational pastors have a stipulated salary. This usually very small, 144. Comparison between the fathers and the children, on this point. Permanency of the pastoral relation, rather theoretical, than practical, of late. Signs of better times, 145. Reasons for dwelling so long upon the ecclesiastical usages of our churches. The system cannot be estimated properly by a knowledge of its theory alone. Authorities for the preceding detail. Other sources of information pointed out, note. Concluding remarks upon this Part, 146, 147.

PART V.

ADVANTAGES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

I. *It is the most scriptural system of church government.* All governments classed as monarchical, aristocratical, or democrati-

cal, page 150. Episcopacy, monarchical; Presbyterianism, aristocratical; Congregationalism, democratical. Episcopacy, Romish, compared with Congregationalism. Church of England compared, 150. Its form, expensiveness, etc. 152. American Episcopacy, identical with the English, 153. Order and government of, 154. Points of difference between American Episcopacy and Congregationalism. Mistake of bishop Hobart, 155. Methodist Episcopal Church compared, 158. Its organization, etc. 159. Anti-republican. The people excluded from the government of. J. Wesley's remark—Watson's. The system instituted by Mr. Wesley, 161. Method of disciplining erring members, 162. Presbyterianism considered, and compared with Congregationalism. Points of resemblance, 164. Of difference. Provincial or national character of Presbyterianism. The church session, 165. Presbytery. Synod. General Assembly, 166. Other denominations classed, 167. Concluding remarks upon this head, 168.

II. *Congregationalism encourages self-government, beyond any other system*, 169. Supposed republican tendency of the system, the reason why its friends have been so persecuted. First civil act of the Plymouth fathers, republican in its character, 170. Influence on the civil institutions of New England. Report of English commissioners, 1664. Number of Congregationalists in New England in 1760, p. 171. Note, Mr. Jefferson's opinion. London Quarterly Review, on the connection between monarchy and Episcopacy, 172.

III. *This system promotes intelligence, beyond any other.* Intelligence indispensable to Congregationalism. Note, views of a correspondent. R. Watson's fears of a democracy in the government of a church, 174. Influence of this system in establishing schools and colleges, etc. 175.

IV. *It furnishes an efficient barrier against heresy and general corruption*, 176. Independency of the churches, a barrier against general corruption. The election of pastors by the churches, a protection from heresy and corruption, 178. The accountability of pastors to the churches, another protection, 179. The objection, that there are, and have been, errors, etc. in Congregational churches, considered. No system exempt from liabilities to error, etc. 179. Corruption of Romanism. Arminianism and tendency towards Popery in the English Episcopal Church. Something of the same in the Protestant Episcopal Church of America. Arianism and Unitarianism, etc. among Presbyterians, 180. Conclusion. President Oaks's commendation of Congregationalism.

APPENDIX.

No. 1. A Letter Missive from persons wishing to be organized into a Congregational church, page 185.

No. 2. Call from a church to a pastor elect, 185.

No. 3. Letter Missive from a Congregational church to a neighboring church, to attend the ordination of a pastor, 187.

the maintenance of the primitive "order of the gospel," is agitated with an earnestness, and to an extent, that has called forth prompt and able responses from several of the watchmen on the walls of Zion. Upham and Pond, Bacon and Mitchell—not to mention others—have successfully devoted a portion of their strength to the enlightenment of the public mind, and the revival of the better days of New England Congregationalism, when the Mathers, and Cottons, and Wises, stood forth as its expounders and defenders. But there remaineth much land yet to be possessed. Ignorance, fanaticism, and superstition are not yet driven from the field. Other leaders of the "sacramental host" are called for by the exigencies of the times. They can hardly be multiplied too much. The energies of the churches need to be aroused and judiciously directed, if the hopes of the fathers and the aims of their most enlightened sons are ever to be accomplished. The appearance of every new and skilful champion in this cause, will therefore be hailed with pleasure. The field before him is wide. To retain what has been already gained, demands great firmness and prudence. To make further conquests and secure them against future intrusion, requires high resolve and heroic courage. Antagonistical principles are every where to be met and combatted; and their defenders, relying on that love of variety and change, which is wrought so deeply into the constitution of man, press onward with bold hearts and confident expectation, of establishing themselves in possession of the same ground once covered exclu-

sively with the trophies of Congregational and evangelical achievement. Their efforts are commensurate with their hopes. Their pulpits abound with earnest discussions—their presses teem with elaborate arguments—their measures are all conceived and carried out with an address that indicates a determination to put to flight the imperfectly organized, and unmarshalled hosts of Congregationalism. Nor are they to be blamed for their conscientious adherence to principles they believe to be scriptural, nor for any honorable efforts they make to extend those principles. Their consistency is worthy of honor—and more than that—of imitation. Would that the friends of Congregationalism might emulate their zeal, and furnish to the world equally bright examples of devotedness, in defence of their distinguishing views of church polity. But how rarely, in point of fact, is "the order, the discipline, and the worship of the church," discussed in a Congregational pulpit! How long the term of years, in which no volume came from the press, explaining and vindicating the principles, doctrines and usages of our churches! How few, jejune and powerless are the measures that have been adopted to secure the influence of those principles over any portion of the public mind! There is a reason assigned for this; but is it defensible? If the weightier matters of the law may not be omitted, are we justified in neglecting to pay our tithes of the mint, annise, and cummin? If the great doctrines and duties of vital godliness are of paramount importance, are the doctrines and duties involved in the scriptural regula-

tion of the churches of no importance at all? Let everything have its appropriate place in the church of the living God! True—it will not be inquired in the day of judgment—'belonged you to this denomination or that—were you an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, or a Congregationalist;' but will not the amount of individual spirituality, and usefulness, be inquired after? and is there no intimate connection between the improvement of the heart and the observance of the most scriptural form of church government and discipline? It is the firm conviction of my own mind, that the symmetry and perfection of the Christian's character depend in no slight degree, on his acquaintance with the teachings of the Holy Spirit on "the order of God's house," and his obedience thereto. And it is under this conviction, that I cheerfully venture a compliance with the suggestion of the beloved and respected author of the following pages, to associate my own name with his, by this brief introductory notice, in an earnest enforcement of the claims of this subject, to the renewed and prayerful attention of the whole body of Congregational ministers and churches. The volume has evidently been prepared with great care and labor. It embodies in a succinct form, and in regular order, the distinguishing features of Congregationalism, as it has hitherto been received by the great body of our denomination, whether in our own or other lands, and discriminates fairly between this and other systems of ecclesiastical government, that claim like it, the Holy Scriptures as their basis. It is a work well adapted to the existing wants of

the Congregational community, and conducted throughout in a spirit of candor and faithfulness that all must admire, whether or not they approve of the conclusions at which it arrives. Its highly popular form of discussion, its simple yet elegant style, together with its studied brevity and fulness, recommend it strongly to the widest circulation.

Finally, if Congregationalism finds much to commend it, in its consonance with the genius of Christianity, and with the meek spirit of Christ and his apostles, and with the design of Revelation to place all men on an equality of rights and privileges before God, and lead them to look beyond all forms, and penetrate the mysteries of godliness—it finds not a little additional commendation to us, in the fact that it stood approved to the judgment of the Fathers of New England, men of whom the old world was not worthy, and of whom the new world thinks not highly enough—men of learning, zeal, and self-sacrificing devotion—men who boldly threw off from them the manacles of religious despotism, and every shred of the false faith protected by it, pushing to the utmost their researches into the oracles of God, and receiving his testimony without equivocation or demur, even at the cost of expatriation and the loss of all the pleasures of kindred and home. We honor their memory, we hold fast to the inheritance they bequeathed us, and sell not our birthright for the "mess of pottage."

RICHARD S. STORRS.

Braintree, July 20, 1840.

CONGREGATIONALISM.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

Church polity—by which is meant everything relating to the order, discipline and worship of the Church—if not itself the most important of subjects, is intimately connected with the vital interests of true religion. But, like other questions of interest and importance, it has been very differently estimated and treated in different periods of the world. Under the Mosaic Dispensation, church polity was a subject of such absorbing interest that it came at length to be considered, by the mass of the Jewish nation, as the very *substance* of religion. But, on the introduction of Christianity, men were taught that it was neither upon Mount Gerizim, nor at Jerusalem, neither with the Samaritan, nor the Jewish ritual alone, that acceptable worship could be performed. The private house, the place of public concourse, the open field, the lake shore, were all made places of public worship; and this too, with the most simple ritual.

In the order, discipline and worship of the first Christian churches, there was as little of formality as was consistent with the great end for which they were organized.

The distinctive peculiarity of their church government was—*Simplicity;* and while the violence of persecution continued, they felt little temptation to vary from this.

Church polity—how estimated by the Reformers.

But, with returning peace and outward prosperity, their simple polity began to give way before the encroachments of worldliness and ambition, until a splendid hierarchal establishment engulfed the churches. Doctrinal errors and licentious practices speedily followed.

At the dawn of the Reformation, these latter enormities attracted special attention; and so engrossed were the Reformers in the work of purifying the Church from doctrinal errors, and immoral practices, that, at first, they gave little heed to the source through which these had come into the Church. If the connection between purity and simplicity of church order, and of religious faith and practice occurred to them, they acted upon the common principle of reforming the greatest abuses first; leaving the lesser ones for after consideration. The wisdom of this course is questionable.

There was, however, in those days a serious impediment to a thorough reform, which, if perceived, could not have been easily surmounted: I refer to the connection of the Church with the State. The Reformers leaned on the princes and nobles of this world; and these were the last men to simplify and spiritualize the polity of the Church. Whether, indeed, they would have countenanced a reform in *doctrine and morals* even, had this been connected with a thorough reformation in the order, and discipline, and worship of the Church, is problematical. Certain it is, that Wickliffe, the pioneer of the Reformation, lost the support of his prince and of the nobility when he started sentiments which countenanced such a reformation. Whether Luther would have succeeded in his labors without the protection of Frederic, the Elector of Saxony; whether the Reformation in England could have been

carried so far, without the concurrence of Henry VIII, and Edward VI; whether what was done could have been accomplished except by the co-operation of these princes, without an entire overturn in the polity of the State, is indeed doubtful. However this may be, one thing is certain, that, while these princes supported the Reformers in their *partial* labors, they held them back from a more thorough and radical reform of the Church; from reinstating it in its primitive simplicity and restoring it to what it was, before the policy of Constantine made it an appendage to the State.

It was not until men began to feel the extreme difficulty of preserving purity of doctrine and practice under a worldly and unscriptural establishment, that their thoughts were turned towards a reformation in the general *polity* of the Church. The philosophy of the connection between church order and church purity, seems not to have been studied much, prior to the seventeenth century; or at least, not to have been acted upon. Yet, this is remarkable, since all previous history had shown, that a simple form of ecclesiastical government and purity of religious faith had ever been intimately associated.

The English Puritans, if not the *discoverers* of this connection, were the men who acted most fully upon the discovery.

The religious ancestors of the Congregationalists of New England, of all men who ever lived, had, perhaps, most occasion to study church polity, in all its connections and bearings. Thrown out of the Church which they regarded as the mother of them all, driven to a land of strangers, left to begin the world anew, and to decide what form of ecclesiastical government they would adopt;

being men of piety, and learning, and experience; familiar with the Scriptures; well read in the history of the world; conversant with the treasures of antiquity—with the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and with classic authors; having had great experience of the workings of an ecclesiastical establishment in their native land, and having enjoyed opportunities while in Holland to examine the polity of the Reformed Churches on the Continent; and feeling the deep responsibility of laying aright the religious foundations of a new world—it was natural, it was unavoidable, that the subject of church order, and discipline, and worship, should arrest, and fix, and for a time, all but *absorb* their attention. If men in their circumstances could not, did not, study to advantage this great subject, then may we well despair of ever having it thoroughly and impartially investigated. Our fathers did study the science of church polity, and the fruits of their study New England—yea, the world itself, has long been gathering.

For many years after the settlement of New England, the subject of church order and government received much attention: some have thought *too much.* But he who has well weighed the bearings of this question upon the interests of pure religion, will be of a different opinion.

However it may have been in the days of our fathers, certain it is, that for many years past, this subject has excited far too little interest among the descendants of the New England Puritans.

Various causes have contributed to produce this state of things. Among the more prominent, perhaps, may be named:

1. The anxiety of Congregationalists to unite different denominations in benevolent religious societies. To ac-

Influence of union in benevolent enterprises.

complish this, there has been a readiness to keep out of sight, and even to sacrifice our denominational peculiarities. However benevolent the *design* of these Unions, the *result* of them has been to injure Congregationalism. Episcopalians, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, while they have united with us in this joint-stock labor sufficiently to neutralize Congregationalism, have kept up their separate and denominational organizations.

But we have had nothing of this sort, by which to propagate our own peculiar views. And while Congregationalists have been furnishing a large proportion of the funds of these Unions, as a denomination, they have derived no benefit from them. They have even, with an unauthorized generosity, yielded the entire advantage to other denominations.

"What then, shall we give up all *united* attempts to save souls, for fear of injuring Congregationalism?" If the question were—shall we save souls, OR promote the interests of any particular denomination? it would be easy to answer. This, however, is not the question. It is—shall we, *in connection with* our efforts to save souls, endeavor to promote the interests of what we esteem as the most scriptural and excellent system of church government in the world; or shall we utterly disregard this? Bishop Hobart thought that *a few Bibles*, and the residue of *Common Prayer Books*, were better for a destitute neighborhood than *all Bibles*.* I would be content, if permitted to write upon every Bible this simple Congregational sentiment—THIS IS THE ONLY INFALLIBLE GUIDE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

* See McVicar's "Professional Days of Bishop Hobart."

Influence of union in benevolent enterprises.

Our Home Missionary societies have founded hundreds of churches in the Western and Southern States; and New England Congregationalists have supplied a very large proportion of the means and men which have established and sustained these churches; and yet, scarce one in fifty of these is upon the Congregational Platform. Scores of young men, professedly Congregationalists, have gone out from our Theological Seminaries and thrown themselves into the bosom of the Presbyterian Church. And why have they done this?—"*To do good.*" And could they not have done good and yet have retained their Puritan principles? Have these made New England an intellectual and moral garden; and yet shall we be told, that they will not answer for the South and West? Had New England men and money carried New England principles of church government wherever they went, and boldly and faithfully sustained them, other sections of our country would now more nearly resemble the land of the Pilgrims. I would neither hinder nor *help* other denominations in establishing their favorite institutions. The land is wide enough for us all. Let each denomination peaceably labor to do the utmost good, in that way which seems to it most accordant with the Divine will. If we are brethren, our *object* is the same; though our *methods of attaining it*, are different. If the question be, Shall there be a Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist, or *no church;* my influence and my money shall freely go for either. But, if the question be, Shall it be either of these, or a *Congregational* church? I am bound by my principles to say—*the latter*, by all means.

We should live with all on the most friendly terms; but chiefly mind our own business.

Influence of Theological Seminaries.

2. Another cause of this state of things—it is suggested with diffidence, and with all due respect to my superiors—may be the operation of the principle on which some of the Theological Seminaries of New England are conducted.

Nearly every dollar of their funds has come from Congregationalists; yet, these seminaries are open alike to all Protestants. To this, as a general principle, there certainly can be no objection. But if, in connection with this admission of different denominations, there should be any hesitation on the part of the teachers of these institutions, to advocate openly, thoroughly, and earnestly, Congregational principles of church government, the influence of this course would be very injurious to the interests of our own denomination. A three years' experience in one of these institutions—and one that has supplied the churches with more than seven hundred ministers—compels me to fear that the operation of the principle referred to, may possibly be among the causes adverse to the spread of Congregationalism.

If the Professors of any of our Theological Seminaries, are even *apparently* indifferent to our church polity, we need not be surprised to find their pupils *really* so.

Shall I be accused of narrow bigotry, in wishing to shut out from these schools of the prophets all but those of our own denomination? I have no such wish; but simply, that our denominational peculiarities receive that attention which their importance demands, and which the interests of the denomination which supports these Seminaries require. If the young men of other denominations please to avail themselves of the advantages of our institutions, they should be welcomed, and kindly treated;

but should expect to hear all the doctrines of the Puritan Congregationalists of New England faithfully and earnestly defended.

3. Another cause of the apathy which pervades the churches upon this subject, may be found in the impression that no efforts are required to protect and promote our excellent system of church government.

It is generally thought that intelligent New England men must of course prefer, to every other, the system to which they have been accustomed from their childhood—especially, as this has so many incontrovertible arguments to support it, and is so perfectly in accordance with the spirit of our free institutions.

That, however, must be a good cause indeed, which will take care of itself; a better cause than this world has ever yet known. The truth is—and there is no occasion for concealment—while Congregationalists have been sleeping in their fancied security, other denominations have not been idle. Their peculiar tenets have been advocated and urged, with a zeal and confidence, which, contrasted with our own apathy, have been as arguments *for* the correctness of other systems, and *against* our own. The inference with many has been: *That* system of church government best *deserves* our attention and belief, whose advocates most urgently and boldly *claim* them. Or, in other words: They who make the *most noise*, have the *best cause*.

4. Another cause of the state of things of which we complain, is found in the dearth of modern books upon Congregationalism.

The fathers of New England covered the land with publications upon church polity. But these are little

known to their posterity ;* and if known, are not now well adapted to general circulation.

Within a few years, it is true, several valuable works bearing upon this subject, have been published ; among which may be named : Dr. Hawes' "Tribute to the Pilgrims," Mr. Bacon's "Church Manual," Prof. Pond's work "The Church," Mr. Mitchell's "Guide," and above all, Prof. Upham's "Ratio Disciplinae." These have found many readers; and have, doubtless, done much to awaken an interest in our excellent system of church government. Still, it may with truth be said, that our denomination is but partially supplied with the needful reading upon this subject. And this fact, while it is an

* To test the truth of these remarks, let any one set himself to buy or borrow almost any of the standard works of the English or American Congregational fathers. Let him begin at our bookstores, and inquire for the writings of John Robinson, or William Ames, or Joseph Caryl, or Thomas Goodwin, or John Owen, or John Cotton, or Thomas Hooker, or Increase Mather, or Samuel Mather ; and what will be the result ? My own experience leads me to doubt whether a copy of any of the above works, with a single exception, can be found in a bookstore in New England.

Go next to the libraries of our Congregational pastors, and the inquiry will be nearly as fruitless. Next examine our public libraries. Begin at Andover, the oldest Theological Seminary in the country—and search for J. Robinson's works, or T. Hooker's, J. Cotton's, I. Mather's, or Samuel Mather's—the fathers of New England Congregationalism, and you will spend your strength for naught. At Cambridge, or in the Boston Atheneum you may find single copies of some of these valuable works—"*rari aves*"—in some dark corner.

While this scarcity of standard works on Congregationalism prevails, Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" and Slater's "Original Draught"—the Atlases of Episcopacy—will meet you at every turn.

evidence of the apathy of our churches, may also be regarded as a *cause* of this undesirable state of things.

To whatever causes this indifference respecting our simple and scriptural church polity may be attributed, the existence of this indifference will not be denied by any one conversant with our churches.

While the general design of this little work is the same with those just named, the *plan* of it, the selection of topics, and the method of treating them, will be found very unlike either of its predecessors. It is strictly—*a treatise on Church Polity.**

* It was a part of the original plan of this work, to present a succinct History of the denomination, with a view of its present state in different parts of the world. Considerable progress has been made in the execution of this design. But the unexpected increase of materials for the History; the unavoidable delay in the collection of statistics by means of correspondence; the difficulty of availing myself of some important helps in this work; and above all, the recent announcement of an English work on the Antiquities of Congregational churches in Great Britain, which may render important aid in this undertaking, and the opinion of several esteemed friends and correspondents that a small work upon Church Polity for general circulation was still a desideratum—have induced me to divide the work, and to publish the following sheets, while I delay, for a while, the publication of what is in readiness of the History of Congregationalism.

PART I.

PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

Our attention is to be directed, in the first place, to a consideration of the PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

It will be perceived that a distinction is recognized in these pages, between the *principles* and the *doctrines* of the system. Many writers disregard this distinction, and class the two together. This course is deemed objectionable, because principles and doctrines are not always convertible terms. A principle is necessarily a doctrine, that is, an *important* truth; but a doctrine is not necessarily a principle or a *fundamental* truth. The doctrines of a system may be somewhat modified, or even materially altered, and some of them entirely abandoned, and yet the system remain substantially the same. But the principles of a system cannot be materially altered, or any of them abandoned, and yet the system itself be unchanged. Principles are the corner-stones, the under-pinning and foundation of the structure: not one of them can be removed without materially affecting the superstructure erected upon them.

This distinction between principles and doctrines, the writer has endeavored to make throughout the following pages, and for reasons which will appear more obvious in the sequel.

By the *principles* of Congregationalism, then, are meant, the essential, fundamental truths of the system, which cannot be abandoned or materially altered without an aban-

donment or alteration of the system itself. What, then, are the principles of this system? Or, in other words:

WHAT IS CONGREGATIONALISM? *Congregationalism is that system of church government in which the Scriptures are recognized as the only infallible guide respecting church order and discipline; — and which maintains that, according to the Scriptures, a church is a company of professed Christians, who, having covenanted and associated together to worship God, and to celebrate religious ordinances, are authorized to elect necessary officers, to make by-laws, to discipline offending members, and to act, authoritatively and conclusively, upon all appropriate business, independently of the control of any person or persons whatsoever.*

This definition is believed to embrace the fundamental, distinctive principles of Congregationalism. Some of these it holds in common with other systems of church government; others, are peculiar to itself; but all are essential to sound Congregationalism. No man—let his doctrinal creed be what it may—is entitled to the name of a consistent and thorough Congregationalist, who does not embrace all of these principles of church order and government.

Who will deny, that a system based on principles like these, has, independently of any direct proof, much to commend it to our confidence: its Protestantism, in taking the Bible for its only infallible guide; its tendency to promote true religion, by combining into organized bodies those who love the cause of Christ, and thus enabling them more effectually and successfully, to cultivate personal piety, and to promote the Redeemer's kingdom; its recognition of the inalienable rights of man, in giving to the church the power to choose its own officers, and to ad-

minister its own affairs; its provision for securing the purity of the church, by giving the right of discipline to those most interested in the maintenance of that purity; its care for the rights and privileges of every church, however small, manifested by its recognition of the independency of each:* — These, and such like considerations, might be urged as *a priori* arguments in favor of the Congregational system. But for the sake of brevity and directness, I shall waive, for the present, all particular consideration of these topics, and proceed, at once, to discuss the principles which have been brought to view in the definition of Congregationalism.

In this discussion the Scriptures will be appealed to as the only standard of truth. The argument from Ecclesiastical History will receive attention in the sequel.

What, then, say the Scriptures? Are the principles of this system of church order and government recognized and authorized by the infallible word of God?

We will consider these principles in detail, and apply this test to each of them.

I. It is a principle of Congregationalism, that *the Scriptures are the only infallible guide in matters of church order and discipline.*

By this is meant, that the injunctions of Christ and his apostles, and the authorized practice of the apostolic churches, are a sufficient guide *in all ages*, to the order and discipline of the churches of Christ. Or, in other words, that the churches founded by the apostles, are the

* The terms "independency" and "independent" as applied to Congregational churches, are never used in these pages as synonymous with *unaccountability* and *unaccountable*, but to denote *completeness* of church powers and privileges.

models after which, "*for substance,*" all churches should be formed.

If the Scriptures furnish not an infallible directory to what is essential in the order and discipline of a Christian church, we certainly have no such directory. And, if we have no infallible guide to the constitution of a Christian church, how are we to know that any such thing as a church of Christ now exists in the world? The reception of the idea of a church, necessarily presupposes a knowledge of what constitutes a church; but if the Scriptures do not furnish this knowledge, then they do not furnish us with the means of forming any distinct idea of a Christian church. And if they fail in this particular, on what authority are any existing organizations called churches of Christ? And by what authority can any person be required to unite with one of these organizations?

Now it will be admitted by all parties, that Christ and his apostles very often speak of Christian churches; and it will be further admitted, that the friends of Christ are required to come out from the world and to unite themselves with these churches; but, unless the general and essential principles on which these bodies are to be organized are given us in the Scriptures, how can any one know when he is complying with the Savior's requisitions, and the apostles' directions? Indeed, how can we prove that any such thing exists as a Christian church, since the very idea of such a body carries with it the idea of an organization which Christ has authorized and established?*

* The learned Dr. George Campbell, though unwilling to admit that any particular form of church government is binding up-

Consequences of denying this.

Again, it will be conceded, that it is an important part of every Christian minister's duty, inasmuch as in him lies, to *make disciples* of all to whom he preaches (Matt. 28: 19), and to gather these disciples into Christian churches, and to administer to them the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Religion cannot long exist in the world, much less *flourish*, if these things are neglected. But how can the ambassador of Christ discharge these important parts of his duty if the Scriptures furnish no infallible directions how to organize these bodies? If he is left in ignorance of the Divine will respecting these matters,

on all Christians, yet allows: * * "That a certain external model of government must have been originally adopted [that is, by Christ and his apostles, as I understand him] for the more effectual preservation of the evangelical institution [the church] in its native purity, and for the careful transmission of it to after ages."—Lectures on Ecc. History, Lect. 4. p. 47. Phil. ed. 1807.

As I shall have occasion frequently to refer to the works of this learned and impartial writer, it may be well to state, for the information of any who may be unacquainted with his writings, that Dr. Campbell was a distinguished scholar, Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen, Scotland. He is the author of a standard work on the Four Gospels, and of a celebrated answer to Hume's work on Miracles. Dr. C. was a Presbyterian by profession; yet, he seems not to have regarded any particular form of church order as essential,—"it affects not the essence of religion in the least," he says. He supposed that one form of church government might be more convenient in one country, and another form in another country. (Lect. 4. p. 50.) With these views, he proposes in his Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, "to speak out boldly what appears to him most probably to have been the case, without considering what sect or party it may either offend or gratify." (Ib.)

The testimony of such a man certainly deserves great respect. The references in the following pages will show how his testimony corroborates the views of Congregationalists.

how can it be true, as the Apostle asserts: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God * * * * *that* the man of God may be perfect [ἄρτιος prepared for], *thoroughly furnished unto all good works;* or, "every good purpose that his ministry is intended to answer,"* 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17. Indeed, would not the great end of the ministry of reconciliation fail, if "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3: 15)—were not duly instituted, organized, and erected?

Another view of this subject may be taken. It will be admitted, that the apostles did organize what they called churches, in different parts of the Roman Empire; and that these churches were all formed upon the same general principles. Now, whatever these principles were, they may be fairly considered as descriptive of the term—"*church*," as used by Christ and the apostles. Or, in other words, if we would understand what Christ and his apostles meant by *a church*, we must examine the principles of those bodies which they called churches.

And, since the duty of men to become church members now, is as imperative as when the apostles preached, and no intimation is given that the *nature* of a Christian church should be changed, it follows, that men should now become members of the same kind of churches, that is, churches built upon the same general principles, as those which are recognized in the Scriptures as Christian churches.

If then we can learn from the Scriptures what was the polity of the *apostolic* churches, cannot we ascertain what should be the polity of *all churches, in all ages of the world?*

* See Dr. Bloomfield's New Testament, in loc.

Constitution of the Church unchanged.

Will it be said—in order to avoid the force of the above suggestions—that the circumstances of the apostolic churches were so unlike our own as to require an entirely different organization? If so, it may be asked in reply: In what respects were their circumstances peculiar? Were they in their infancy? So is every church, when first formed. "But, Christianity itself was then in its infancy." So it is in every heathen land when the first missionary church is organized. Should we, therefore, institute churches at our missionary stations, first, upon the primitive plan; and afterwards pull them down, and put up those of an *improved* model—improved, however, by man's wisdom solely?

If the churches, and Christianity itself, were in their infancy when the primitive models were erected, *then*, surely if ever, the churches should have been "under governors and tutors;" and should have enjoyed the *least* freedom of choice, and liberty of action. But instead of this, those who object to the apostolic churches as models for us, are for *restricting* the liberties of the churches; and for giving them less freedom rather than more; and to their governors *more* authority rather than *less*, as the churches and Christianity itself advance towards maturity. A strange procedure this surely. It is as though it should be said: When you are a child you may have your *own* way; but as you approach maturity, your liberty of choice and your freedom of action must be restricted.

2. Another objection to the primitive models, is, that they are not sufficiently attractive for the present prosperous state of the Christian Church. They answered very well when the Church was oppressed and persecuted; but now that she is in her glory, something more attrac-

tive and imposing becomes desirable and proper. That is to say: God's work needs to be remodeled and improved by man's wisdom. But, have we any authority for such a procedure? Is there any intimation in the Scriptures, that God designed the apostolic model of church order and discipline to be merely temporary? It is true that the churches erected by the apostles were very simple in their order, and much less attractive to worldly eyes, than some of more recent date; and it is equally true, that this simplicity was in perfect accordance with the spirit of the Christian Dispensation; and that a departure from the apostolic principles of church order, has been followed by a parallel departure from the spirit of Christianity itself.

And, do we not greatly err, when we suppose that the circumstances of the primitive churches were so very unlike ours, as to authorize any material change in their polity? The difficulties which environed them were substantially the same which now oppose the prosperity of the churches of Christ. Human nature does not alter by the lapse of time. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" still. We see not, every where, the same *developments* of this enmity; but the same *spirit* is every where displayed; and it requires only a change of circumstances, in any given case, to bring out the same developments of enmity against the Church of God now, which were witnessed in the days of Christ and his apostles.

The world is no more friendly to the Church now, than it was eighteen hundred years ago. The present state of society in nominally Christian countries, does not indeed admit of such bloody persecutions as once desolated the churches; and such as they are even now exposed to in heathen lands, and where anti-christian principles prevail.

in their essential features.

—Still, it is as true now as ever, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."

The fagot and the sword are not the only instruments of persecution; nor even the most dreadful. The "bitter words," the scoffs and jeers, the contemptuous sneer, or even the smiles and flattery of an unbelieving world, are more dangerous to a church than those appliances which kill the body.

But the history of Congregationalism will show, that whether the world "rage or laugh," the primitive model of church government is equally well adapted to the necessities of the Church of Christ.

Let us not, however, be misunderstood. We do not advocate an exact and entire conformity to all the peculiarities of the apostolic churches; for we know this to be impossible. We plead only for conformity in *essentials*. And it is certainly possible to imitate the apostolic models thus far, without following them in all the minutiæ of their doctrines and practice. I may take my neighbor's house for a model in building my own; and yet, not have precisely the same number of doors and windows, or those of exactly the same dimensions. I may have blinds or not; I may paint it or leave it unpainted; I may vary in numerous particulars; and yet, my house may be *substantially* like my neighbor's. Just so, we may imitate the apostolic models in all that is essential; and follow them in other respects so far as our circumstances are similar to theirs.

This is the rule by which we interpret the instructions of Christ and his apostles, and the authorized example of primitive Christians, in respect to other matters; why should it not be applied in the case under consideration?

Congregationalists, thorough Protestants.

This, then, is the sum of our belief: We suppose that whatever was *essential* to the existence of a church of Christ in the days of the apostles, is equally essential to a Christian church in these later days; — that Christ designed that the *principles* of church order and discipline should remain the same, in all ages of the world; — that his disciples have no liberty to adopt other principles; — and, that these principles may be learned from the Scriptures; though not always from express injunctions and instructions upon the subject, since the authorized *example* of the apostolic churches is equally authoritative with express commands.

In adopting and acting upon these views, Congregationalists regard themselves as thorough Protestants. The Bible is our only infallible guide, in matters of church order and discipline, as well as of faith and religious practice. We cannot believe it to be necessary to resort to the writings of any men as "a supplement to Scripture in these points." * Adopting this principle, we are on firm and safe ground. All else is uncertain.

* A dignitary in the Church of England has asserted, that "He must never have looked into Scripture who is capable of thinking it a perfect rule of worship, I mean external worship and discipline: but he that will take in the writings of the primitive church as *a supplement to Scripture in these points*, cannot be at a loss to know what are the powers of church governors, or what the obedience due unto them." See Samuel Mather's Apology for the New England Churches, pp. 2, 3.

And yet this "supplement" to points of such vast importance to the Church, is found in tongues unknown to the great mass of its members—in the Greek and Latin languages; and in volumes of frightful magnitude, and inaccessible to the community generally. And more than all, many of the Fathers are so corrupt in their text,

Christian church, a voluntary association.

Having settled in our minds this first and great principle — that the Scriptures are our only infallible guide — we next inquire: What, according to them, is essential to the character of a Christian church? The answer to this question, will be the statement of the second great principle of the Congregational system, viz.

II. *A Christian church is a voluntary association of professed Christians, united together for the worship of God and the celebration of religious ordinances.*

When we use the term *voluntary*, we do not mean, that Christians are under no obligations thus to associate together; for, we believe that every disciple of Christ is bound by the most solemn obligations, to separate himself from the world; but we mean, that in doing this, it is essential that every person should act freely, under the influence of motives; and, that no circumstances of birth, no civil law, no political regulations can constitute a church, or entitle one to church membership.

But, voluntary association for religious purposes, is not all that is requisite to constitute a church of Christ. The persons thus associated must be *professed Christians:* that is, persons who avow publicly, their repentance for sin, and their faith in Jesus Christ as the propitiation for their sins; and their cordial submission to the laws of Christ's kingdom.

The entire system of church government which we advocate, is based on the presumption that those who adopt it will be governed by religious principle. The system is

and so contradictory in their statements, that the most opposite testimonies have been drawn from them.

I shall have occasion to remark upon this topic more fully, when examining the testimony of antiquity.

as unsuited to *irreligious* men, as a republican form of civil government is to *ignorant* men. All power being vested in the hands of the church, the members of the church should understand the principles of their own government, and appreciate the importance of sustaining it. But no unsanctified mind can understand these spiritual, religious principles, 1 Cor. 2: 14. You can never make such an one feel the importance of that purity of heart, of thought, of word, and of action, which God's law requires; and by which the members of his churches are expected to be governed. The conscience of the "natural man" having never been quickened by the Spirit of God, does not detect the sinfulness of certain courses of conduct which "he that is spiritual" will at once perceive. Never having been humbled under the mighty hand of God, the 'carnal mind' is not prepared to submit itself to others, as the word of God requires, Eph. 5: 21. Pride, obstinacy, and selfishness in all its various forms, are cherished in the sinner's heart. Ignorant and regardless of the principles of God's moral law, he is utterly disqualified to administer a government based upon these holy principles. Hence appears the reasonableness of this fundamental principle of the Congregational system—that *a public profession of faith in Christ, and submission of the soul to God, should be an indispensable pre-requisite to church membership.*

This peculiarity of our church polity, so far from being an *objectionable* feature—as some regard it—is one of its highest recommendations. It proves it to be in harmony with the whole spirit of the gospel; and thus furnishes very strong presumptive evidence of its truth.

Furthermore, it is very apparent from the Scriptures,

that all who were connected with the apostolic churches, were such as publicly professed their faith in Christ, and their cordial submission to the principles of the gospel.

In the second chapter of Acts we have an account of the circumstances attending the first admission of members to the Christian church, after the Savior's ascension: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they (i. e. the 120 disciples, who constituted the first Christian church, at Jerusalem) were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly their came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This being noised abroad a multitude of persons came together. "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven" [apostles], addressed this assembled multitude in the most instructive and affecting manner. They concluded their address, by charging upon the multitude before them, the guilt of having crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words

did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them, about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles, and all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

From this account it is evident, that the apostles received none into the church at that time, but those who publicly professed their repentance for sin, and their faith in Christ; none but those who "*believed*"—who "*gladly received the word.*" That they *professed* this belief, and this reception of gospel principles of action is clearly implied in the declaration, that "*they were baptized;*" for baptism was a solemn and public renunciation of their previous opinions, so far as these were inconsistent with the gospel, and an open profession of their faith in Christ. The conduct of these converts, subsequently to their baptism, confirms this interpretation, for in the 44th verse we read: "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common" * * "And they, continuing daily in the temple, with one accord, and breaking bread from house to house * * praising God, and having favor with all the people." If all this was not a renunciation of their

Jewish prejudices, and a public profession of faith in Christ, actions have no significancy.

The principle that piety, and the profession thereof, are both requisite to church membership, receives further confirmation from the language of the apostle, Rom. 10: 8, 9, 10; "This is the word of faith" [or the faithful word—the gospel] "which we preach; that *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus Christ, and *shalt believe in thy heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The words of the Savior himself (Matt. 10: 32), inculcate the same doctrine: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

The manner in which the apostles speak of, and to the churches in their epistles, clearly proves that these churches were composed of persons who had made a creditable profession of faith in Christ.

Paul, in his epistle to the church at Rome, addresses them as "*beloved of God, called to be saints;*" and says: "I thank my God that your faith is spoken of throughout the world," Rom. 1: 7, 8. But how could this be, if they had not made a public profession of their faith?

To the Corinthians, Paul writes: "Unto *the church of God* which is at Corinth, *to them that are sanctified in* [or through faith in] *Christ Jesus, called to be saints*" * * 1 Cor. 1: 2.

The Galatians are called "*children of the promise,*" Gal. 4: 28; on the ground, that, if they were Christ's, or Christians, they were "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The Ephesians he calls "*saints*," and "*the faithful in Christ Jesus*," Eph. 1: 1.

The Philippian church, with their "bishops and deacons," he commends for their "*fellowship in the gospel;*" as persons, in whom God had "*begun a good work;*" and declares: "*Ye all are partakers of my grace*," Phil. 1: 1, 5, 7.

"Unto the church of the Thessalonians, *which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ*," Paul wrote: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, *your election of God.*" He then declares to them: "Ye became *followers of us and of the Lord*, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were *ensamples to all that believe* in Macedonia and Achaia. For, from you *sounded out the word of the Lord* not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also, in every place *your faith to God-ward is spread abroad*," 1 Thess. 1: 1—10. All this could not have been said of them, had they not publicly professed their faith in Jesus Christ.

In the 2 Cor. 6: 14—18, is this remarkable passage: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [ἀπίστου an *unbeliever.*]* And what agreement hath the temple of God [or *the church* of God, see Eph. 2: 19—22] with idols?

* So the word is translated in the 14th verse, and elsewhere, and so it should be here.

General conclusions from the foregoing testimony.

For, ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said: I will dwell in them and walk in them [see Rev. 2: 1]; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore, COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, AND BE YE SEPARATE, *saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;* and I will receive you, and be a God unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

This passage furnishes direct and positive proof, that a church should consist of believers in Christ, who have publicly professed their faith, and thus separated themselves from the unbelieving world. Such an interpretation of the passage harmonizes with the design of the apostle, as expressed in the context, and with his instructions elsewhere; and is required by the natural and obvious meaning of the words of the text.*

It is perfectly evident from the passages which have been quoted, that the apostolic churches were composed of those only who were regarded as "saints," as "spiritual," as persons who had fellowship with the apostles in the gospel of Christ, who were "beloved of God," "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. 1: 2; and who had so made known their faith, that others had taken knowledge of them that they had been with Christ. If all the members of the apostolic churches were required to make a public profession of their faith in Christ, as a prerequisite to church fellowship, and no alteration has been made in the nature of a Christian church, or the terms of

* See Dwight's Theology, Sermon 149. Also, Preface to Owen, on "The nature of a gospel church."

communion, it follows, that *no person should now be admitted to a Christian church, who does not make a creditable profession of his faith in Jesus Christ, and give evidence of genuine conversion of soul to God.*

III. Another principle of Congregationalism is, that *a church should ordinarily consist of only so many members as can conveniently assemble together for public worship, the celebration of religious ordinances, and the transaction of church business.*

The Greek word ἐκκλησία,* commonly rendered *church*, literally signifies *a congregation, an assembly*, "an assembly *called out* or *separated* from others;" and it is usually employed in the New Testament to designate a voluntary *association of professed believers, united together for religious purposes.* Thus it is used by the sacred writers in about *forty* different instances. In Acts 2: 47, we read: "The Lord added to *the church* daily such as should be saved." Now this *church* is expressly described as a voluntary association of persons for religious purposes—persons who were "*steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship*," who "*were together with one accord*," etc. (See Acts 2: 41—47.) Such was the character of the church at Jerusalem, the first Christian church.

This church was, I conceive, a *model* after which all the apostolic churches were formed.† This was a *complete* church; and was, therefore, called "THE *church at Jerusalem.*"

Other churches are spoken of as equally complete; and

* Pronounced *ecclesia;* from whence the English word *ecclesiastical.*

† See Gieseler's "Text-Book of Ecclesiastical History," translated by Mr. Cunningham, vol. 1. p. 56.

Provincial churches unknown to the Apostles.

are designated by the names of the several places in which they were formed; as "the church *at Antioch*," "the church *at Corinth*," "the church *at Ephesus*," etc. If each of these companies of Christians had not been regarded as constituting an entire and complete church, they certainly would not have been thus designated. Instead of such phraseology, we should have read of *that portion* of the church of Christ which resided at Ephesus, Corinth, or Antioch; and not, of *the church* of Ephesus, etc.

The language of the sacred writers does not allow us to believe that the Christians of the same province, even, were embraced in a single church; for they speak of "the *churches* of Macedonia," and "the *churches* of Asia,"—not of *the church* of Asia, or Macedonia. But why so? Evidently because there was more than one voluntary association of believers in each of these provinces. Any one who will examine the New Testament upon this point, will find abundant evidence that this distinction between a church and churches is carefully made by the inspired writers. Hence we infer, that *every* company of believers who associate and covenant together for church purposes, are, to all intents and purposes, *a church of Christ;* and if so, should embrace no more members than can conveniently meet for the transaction of church business and the celebration of religious ordinances.

Acting upon this principle, we find that the apostle organized a church at Corinth, and another at Cenchrea, (see Rom. 16: 1) the port of Corinth; which, being but nine miles distant, was usually considered as the suburbs of the city itself. From the language of the apostle, it is evident that the associated believers at Cenchrea were as

truly and completely *a church* as their more numerous brethren in the parent city: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea."

The obvious reason why the Christians in these two places were not united together in one church was, that in the organization of churches, the apostle proceeded on the principle that a church should consist of only so many as can conveniently assemble together for public worship, the celebration of religious ordinances, and the transaction of church business; and as these brethren were nine miles apart—though resident in the same city—and were sufficiently numerous in each place to constitute a distinct church, he organized them separately. If then we would follow apostolic example, we must give our churches a congregational* organization: that is, we must regard every duly organized congregation of professed believers as a complete and entire church.

It is objected to these views, that the *size* of some of the primitive churches forbid us to believe that they were congregationally organized. Milner says: "It is absurd to suppose that the great church at Ephesus, in the decline of St. John's life, should be only a single congregation; and, most probably, the same is true of all the rest." Church Hist. Vol. I. p. 476.

He then goes on to estimate the Christians of Ephesus, at "many thousands," and the church at Jerusalem, at the same. Hence he draws the inference, that their members could not all have met together for church purposes; and therefore, could not have been *congregationally* organized.

* I use the word in a general sense here.

answered.

An obvious remark upon this statement, is, that we are not furnished by the Scriptures with sufficient data from which to form any satisfactory conclusions, respecting the exact number of the church at Ephesus or Jerusalem. We know, it is true, that 3000 were added to the church at Jerusalem, as the result of the preaching of Peter and the other apostles on the day of Pentecost: but, it must be remembered, that many of these were Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, etc. (Acts 2: 9—11), who had assembled at Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost; and who soon left the city for their distant homes. Subsequently, additions were made to this church, from time to time, "of such as should be saved;" but, how many of them were stated residents in the city, or, how ample were their accommodations for church purposes, we are not informed.

Of Ephesus, we only know that Paul labored there "in season and out of season," "by the space of three years;" and that "mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." But Paul, doubtless, would have considered the encouragement to remain in this city ample, had he seen a few *hundreds* turning to the Lord, instead of "many thousands;" and Luke would have been justified in declaring that "*mightily grew* the word of God," had only some hundreds of souls, been converted in that profligate city. It should be borne in mind also, that Ephesus was a great mart for the country round about it; and a famous resort for the idolaters of Asia Minor; because here was that wonder of the world, the temple of Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians. For this reason, if for no other, the apostle might have thought it proper to devote special attention

to this city; since, by being there, he could, in effect, preach the gospel throughout all Asia, as Luke tells us he did. See Acts 19: 10.

Slater, in his "Original Draught of the Primitive Church"—a standard work among Episcopalians in this country and in England—labors hard to rebut the idea that the church at Antioch was a Congregational church. For this purpose, he refers repeatedly to the 11th chapter of Acts. He quotes, however, only a few words from the sacred text under each specification: had he given the entire passage, he would have overturned his whole argument, so far as the Scripture testimony goes. To avoid the possibility of misrepresenting him, I will quote the passage entire.

"Antioch was early blessed with the glad tidings of the gospel; the blood of the first martyr became the seeds of a Christian church there, as the fathers took a pleasure to speak; for many Christians, dispersed upon that occasion, resorted thither; and the first account we have of their labors is, that *the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord*, Acts 11: 19. ver. 21—27. Tidings of this came to the Church of Jerusalem, where the whole college of apostles were in readiness to consult for them. *They send* Barnabas, *a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of Faith*, to improve this happy opportunity, and the success answered their expectation; for by his powerful exhortations, *much people*, says the holy text, *was added to the Lord*. But to forward this work of the Lord still more, Barnabas travels to Tarsus, and joins Saul, the great apostle of the Gentiles now, and returning with him to *Antioch, they continue a whole year together* in that populous city, teaching *much people*. What a harvest of Christian converts those apostolical laborers made in that compass of time, assisted by all that fled thither from Jerusalem besides, by the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, fellow-laborers with them (Acts 11: 20), to convert the Greeks as well as Jews to the faith; and by

shown to be incorrect.

the several inspired prophets, so peculiarly noted to be amongst them (Acts 11: 27, and 13: 1), I refer to the sober judgment of all who know the fruits of many single sermons preached by an apostle, at the first promulgation of the Gospel. Two things are sure, 1st, That the reputation and honor of the converts there was such, that they laid aside the derided name of Nazarenes or Galilæans now, and openly assumed the name of their Lord and Master (Acts 11: 26), and were first called Christians there. 2ndly, That there were two distinct sects or parties of them (Acts 15: 1, 2); Judaizing Christians, zealous of the Law; and Gentile converts as earnestly insisting on their freedom and exemption from it: Each party so considerable, as to call for an apostolical council to decide the controversy between them."*

Upon this passage it may be remarked, That it presents to the reader a very inaccurate, not to say *distorted* view of the whole matter. I will make some specifications in proof of this. In reference to the conversion of the Antiochians, Mr. Slater says: "Tidings of this came to the church of Jerusalem, *where the whole college of apostles were in readiness to consult for them. They* send Barnabas, a good man, etc. * * * to improve this happy opportunity." * * *

Was it by *design*, or accidental, that we are thus left to understand that *the apostles* sent Barnabas to Antioch? However this may be, certain it is, that the sacred text gives no countenance to such a representation. It reads thus: "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of THE CHURCH which was in Jerusalem: and THEY sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, Acts 11: 22; not one syllable is said of "*the whole college of apostles;*" but the whole matter is spoken of as one in which "THE CHURCH *which was in Jerusalem*" was con-

* pp. 70—72, American edition.

cerned. It was *the church* that received the glad news, and it was *the church* that sent forth Barnabas.

Notice again, the representation in the next paragraph of the "Draught." "But to forward this work, * * * Barnabas travels to Tarsus, and joins Saul, * * * and returning with him to *Antioch*, *they continue a whole year together* in that populous city, teaching *much people*."

Now, compare this passage with the text, of which it is a paraphrase: "And it came to pass, that a whole year they [Barnabas and Saul] *assembled themselves with the church*,* and taught much people," ὄχλον ἱκανὸν, a great multitude, 11: 26. It is evident, from this passage, that large as was the multitude, the church at Antioch at this time was not so large but that it could *assemble together* with their teachers, for public worship.

Another observation of Slater respecting the "harvest of Christian converts those apostolical laborers made, assisted by all that fled thither from Jerusalem, besides by the men of Cyprus and Cyrene," etc. deserve remark. This observation, designed evidently to carry the impression that there must have been a sort of diocesan church at Antioch, even in the apostles' days, receives a satisfactory answer from two or three texts of Scripture. Not to urge Acts 13: 1—4, where we are very plainly taught, that the whole church of Antioch were assembled, and were concerned in the work of setting apart Barnabas and Saul, as missionaries to the heathen, we may refer to Acts 14: 25

* συναχθῆναι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. Bloomfield would render it, "were associated in the congregation [as colleagues]." Kuinoel, however, sanctions our translation: "conveniebant cum coetu," says he—they assembled with the church. It is not, however, material to our purpose which interpretation we adopt.

Same subject continued.

—27; "And when they [Barnabas and Saul] had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia; and thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled"—that is, the work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles; to which they had been set apart, as I suppose, by the church of Antioch. "And when they were come, and had *gathered the church together*, they rehearsed all that God had done with them." * * * Now, here we have "*the church* that was at Antioch," "*gathered together.*" It was not the *elders* of the church that were gathered together, but—*the church.* We are thus taught, that all the "harvest of Christian converts" which had then been reaped could be gathered into one place.

And even at a somewhat later period, after the division of the church about the question of circumcision, to which Slater refers as a further evidence that the converts at Antioch were too numerous to be included in a single Congregational church—even after this, we learn that the whole multitude could be gathered together. In the 15th chapter we read, that it pleased "the apostles and elders, *with the whole church*" at Jerusalem, "to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch," to carry the opinion of the Jerusalem church upon the agitated question: "So when they were dismissed [by the church at Jerusalem] they came to Antioch; and *when they had gathered the multitude together* they delivered the epistle," etc. See 15: 22—30. By "*the multitude,*" no one can doubt but that the whole body of believers is intended; for the same expression is used in the 12th verse of this chapter to denote the whole body of Christians at Jerusalem. Compare 4th, 6th, 12th, 22d and 23d verses.

Now I would "refer to the sober judgment of all" im-

partial men to say, whether the Scriptures must not be wrested from their natural and obvious meaning, in order to make the church at Antioch anything more than a *Congregational* church?—that is, a body of believers who could assemble together in one place for religious purposes?

As to what is true of this church after the apostles' times, I have nothing now to say. Whether Antioch contained *one* or *fifty* congregations of Christians, at a later period, I am not concerned, just now, to know; but if any man will open the Acts of the Apostles, and read from the 11th to the 16th chapter, and find anything that savors of Diocesan Episcopacy, or anything that contradicts the idea that the church at Antioch, and the others there spoken of, were other than *Congregational* in their character, he must understand language very differently from what I am able to do.

So clear is the testimony of Scripture upon this point, that many Episcopal writers have been constrained to admit, that the apostolic churches were essentially Congregational in their organization and practice; and so continued, until their inspired teachers were removed. But these writers object to the inference, that *all churches* should be modeled after these primitive patterns: "For," says one of them, "as soon as the death of the last of the apostles had deprived them (i. e. the primitive churches) of the more immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, and left them, under God's especial care and providence, to the uninspired direction of mere men; so soon every church, respecting which we possess any distinct information, adopted the Episcopal form of government."*

* See Waddington's History of the Church, (Harper's edition,) chap. 2. § 2.

—inference from these. All ecclesiastical power in the church.

Our inference from these admitted facts would be exactly the reverse of Mr. Waddington's. Why, we ask, did the apostles organize churches throughout the Roman Empire, upon a plan which they must have known (according to the supposition under consideration) would be adapted to the circumstances of the church for a very few years only? Could Paul have regarded himself as "a wise master builder" when laying the foundation, and framing together a building which would require an entire remodeling, so soon as the grave should close upon himself and his inspired companions? — an event of which they lived in daily expectation. Can it be, that the apostolic organizations were no better than so many temporary sheds, constructed merely for the emergency of the times, and designed to be taken down, and replaced by the fair temple of Episcopacy, so soon as the church should become sufficiently numerous and rich?

If the Episcopal form of church government was adopted by the churches just so soon as they were left "to the uninspired direction of mere men," as Waddington asserts, it is, in our view, one of the strongest evidences, that diocesan Episcopacy is of *man* and not of *God;* and affords another illustration of the disposition of man to seek out "many inventions;" to be wise above what is written; and to forsake the simplicity of the gospel.

IV. It is a principle of Congregationalism, that *every church is authorized to choose its own officers, discipline its own members, and transact all other appropriate business, independently of any other church, or ecclesiastical body, or person:* Or, in other words—*that all church power is vested in the hands of those who constitute the church.*

This principle flows naturally and unavoidably from the

preceding. If a church be an authorized voluntary association, for specific and lawful purposes, then this association must have the right to choose such officers, make such regulations, and adopt such measures, as are essential to the ends for which it is formed. We find this principle fully recognized in the practice of the apostolic churches. For example: in Acts 1: 15—26, there is an account of the proceedings of the church at Jerusalem immediately after Christ's ascension; from which we learn, that, by the suggestion of Peter, the assembled disciples "(the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty)" appointed two of their number, from whom to select, by lot, one to occupy the place of Judas. "They appointed two," says the evangelist, "Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias." Now, if the brethren of the church at Jerusalem, in the presence and by the direction of the apostles themselves, were authorized to make such an election, are not those churches which are formed after the model of this primitive church, authorized to choose their own officers?

In Acts 6: 1—6, we have another instance in which this same model-church exercised the right of choosing ecclesiastical officers. It seems that complaints were made to the apostles that the charities of the church were not duly dispensed. Whereupon the apostles called "the *multitude of the disciples* unto them" (that is, the whole church) and directed them to "*look out among them* seven men," to attend to this business. "And the saying pleased the *whole multitude;* and *they chose* Stephen, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, etc." Now, why did not the apostles select these men? Why was the matter submitted to "the *whole multitude of the disciples?* For the very obvious

reason, that it was the prerogative of the church to choose its own officers; and the apostles dared not go beyond their "measure,"—the bounds which Christ had given them. See 2 Cor. 10: 13—15.

But if it was the right and privilege of the church at Jerusalem—formed by the apostles themselves, and under their special supervision and instruction—to choose their own officers, can this right and privilege be denied to any church founded on the same general principles, and composed of the same materials? And if the APOSTLES were not authorized to *control* the churches in these matters, who is he that shall now claim this authority?

In 1 Cor. 5: 1—8, we have Paul's instructions to the church at Corinth, to discipline, and even to excommunicate an offending member: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when *ye are gathered together*, and my Spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ" [being present to sanction your doings, I direct or advise you] "*to deliver such an one unto Satan* for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." * * "know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? *Purge out, therefore, the old leaven*, that ye may be a new lump."

Is it not perfectly evident, that the Corinthian church are here directed to perform an act of discipline of the highest and most solemn character? even to cut off one of their own members, and cast him from them, as a heathen man and a publican?

See also, 2 Cor. 2: 6—11, where Paul gives intimations to the church respecting their duty to the incestuous person, after his repentance for his sin: "sufficient," says he, "to such a man is this punishment, WHICH WAS INFLICTED

Paul recognizes this authority of the churches.

OF MANY," [that is, by a vote of the church] "so that ye ought rather to forgive him and comfort him. * * * * Wherefore *I beseech you* that ye would confirm your love toward him" (that is, by restoring him to your favor and communion). The apostle does not here speak as one having the key of the Corinthian church; but contrariwise; as one who recognized the power "*of the many*," (ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων, of the majority of the church) to act in the matter. He does not *command* the church to restore the penitent; but he "*beseeches*" them: much less does he presume to restore the excommunicated person by the authority vested in himself as a minister of the gospel of Christ.

In view of these facts, the inquiry arises: If the church at Corinth were authorized to perform this most solemn and most important of all ecclesiastical acts, were they not empowered to transact *all* appropriate church business? And if Paul himself, "the chiefest of the apostles," did not presume to act for the church, but contented himself with directing them how to act for themselves—not in *his* name, nor by *his* authority, but *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, and by *His* authority—then, surely, no person has a right to control and dictate a church; but the power to act authoritatively must rest in the church alone, assembled together in the name, and by the authority of Jesus Christ.

Another passage of Scripture, which seems to us as unquestionable evidence of the correctness of the principle under consideration, and not less so, of another fundamental point in the Congregational system, is Matt. 18: 15—18; where the great Head of the Church gives his disciples particular directions how to proceed in cases of

trespass and offence among them: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the "mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, *tell it unto* THE CHURCH: *but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.*" "Verily I say unto you, *whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven:*"* that is, your doings as a church on earth, shall be ratified by me in heaven.

If in this passage, the keys of the church are not put into the hands of the church—if the power to discipline, and even to excommunicate (the most important of all church acts) is not committed to the associated brethren, here called *the church*—then there is no meaning in words.

With what show of reason, then, can it be maintained, that the power of excommunication is here given to the *the apostles;* and, "*in a qualified sense*, may apply *to Christian teachers*, in all ages;"* especially, when it is admitted, by the same critic, that "tell it to the church," (εἰπὲ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ) must mean to the *particular congregation* to which you both, respectively, belong.

What unprejudiced reader of the Savior's directions

* See an excellent sermon upon this text by Dr. Emmons, in which he terms the passage—"The platform of ecclesiastical government, established by the Lord Jesus Christ."

† See Bloomfield's New Test. in loc.

will think of denying that the power to bind and loose, to receive and to excommunicate, is here expressly given to the church, as such; that is, to the "*particular congregation*" of believers to which the trespasser and complainant respectively belong; and, not to the apostles, as such, or to Christian teachers only?

Admitting the Congregational principle, that every company of believers, who have entered into covenant engagements for church purposes is a complete church, and authorized to transact all business independently of the authoritative control or direction of any person or body of men whatever—admitting this, and the directions of the Savior in Matt. xviii. are all easily understood and obeyed. But, denying this principle, how can we proceed in cases of trespass? Who, and what is "*the church*," to which we are ultimately to carry our cause; and whose decision is to be final? If the apostles alone were intended, by the direction "tell it to the church," then, there is no one *now* authorized to settle difficulties between church members; yea, church discipline is out of the question; every member may walk as seemeth right in his own eyes, with none to say, 'why do ye so?' Who can believe that Christ has left his church in such a condition? The great Head of the Church knew that "offences must needs come." He knew, too, that a church could not long continue an organized and religious body, separate from the world, if destitute of power to "*purge out*" the leaven of impurity, which would inevitably infuse itself into the mass. Knowing all this, can we believe that he has neglected to provide an effectual remedy? We cannot. This remedy is pointed out, in the 18th chap. of Matt. Here we have an infallible guide, unto which, if we take heed, we shall do well.

Officers of the church, or "church session," not "the church."

But it may be said, that this disciplinary power is lodged with the teachers of the church, as the successors of the apostles. Then I ask; what, if a church be destitute of a teacher, as some of our churches are for a succession of years? What then becomes of discipline?

But suppose, to avoid this difficulty, it be said, that the power to discipline offenders should be committed to a "Church Session?"* Why, then, it may be asked, did Paul direct the Corinthian *church* (1 Cor. 5:) to "*gather together*" in order to pass an act of excommunication upon the incestuous person? Why were not his instructions addressed to the *officers* of the church alone? Is it not as clear, that the apostle directed "*the church* which was in Corinth"—that is, "them that were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1: 2), to perform this act of discipline, as it is, that his epistle was directed to the church as a body, and not to the officers merely? And if so, then have we evidence from the Scriptures, that the power and right to exercise Christian discipline, were anciently vested in the congregated church alone; and that neither the elders of the church, nor the representatives of the body, could act independently of the brethren who constituted the church. This is a principle of our system: that, so far as the management of its own affairs are concerned, every church should be an independent republic;

* "The Church Session consists of the Pastor or Pastors, and the Ruling Elders of a Presbyterian Congregation. (See Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, 18mo. p. 388. Phil. 1821.) This body is constructively, *the church* or *the congregation*. Dr. Campbell's remark upon such sort of churches is worth repeating: "The notion * * * of *a church representative*, how commonly soever it has been received, *is a mere usurper*" * * * Lectures on Ecc. History, Lect. 10. p. 166.

invested by Christ with all needful authority to elect officers, to make laws not inconsistent with the established constitution of the churches, to administer its own government, and to do all other things which are necessary to its individual welfare, and consistent with the general principles of the Gospel.

The principles which have now been discussed, may be regarded as the four corner stones of the Congregational system. On these the whole edifice rests. Remove either of them, and the fair fabric of Congregationalism will be shattered. But the storms of centuries have beaten upon it in vain, and it is confidently believed, that nothing can move it, for it is "founded upon a rock."

PART II.

DOCTRINES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

GROWING out of the principles which have just been considered, and more or less intimately connected with them, are several important *doctrines;* in the maintenance of which all consistent Congregationalists agree. Among these may be mentioned:

1. *That there are but two orders of church officers,* ELDERS—sometimes called pastors, teachers, overseers, bishops—and DEACONS.

It is admitted that there were among the apostolic churches a greater variety of official persons than have now been mentioned. But do the Scriptures furnish evidence that any other officers except elders and deacons, were appointed by particular churches; or were *permanently* connected with them?

The church at Jerusalem, it is true, chose an apostle to take the place of Judas, Acts 1: 15—26; the church at Antioch appointed Barnabas and Saul to go forth as missionaries among the Gentiles, Acts 13: 1—3; and there were among the primitive churches, evangelists, or ministers without permanent charge, as Timothy and Titus; but, neither of these were *church officers,* properly speaking. They had no official connection with any particular church; they were, strictly speaking, ministers at large, or missionaries.*

* Timothy is directed by Paul (2 Tim. 4: 5) to "do the work of *an evangelist*" (ἔργον ποίησον εὐαγγελιστοῦ). "Theodoret testifies,"

Assistants in the Apostolic churches.

Besides the apostles and evangelists, there were in the primitive churches several other orders of religious teachers and helpers. These are enumerated by the apostle, 1 Cor. 12: 28: "God hath set some in the church, first *apostles*, secondly *prophets*, thirdly *teachers*, after that *miracles* (men possessed of special miraculous power), then *gifts of healing* (a kind of divinely educated physicians), *helps*, *governments* (persons especially qualified to assist in the government of the churches), *diversities of tongues*" (persons gifted with the power of speaking different languages).

Not to enter upon the disputed question—what were the limits of these several religious helpers? or even, the question whether the terms employed designate distinct offices and officers in the church*—it will be readily admitted,

says Wahl, "that the term *εὐαγγελισταί* was originally applied to those * * * who were not stationary teachers, but were sent by the apostles to different countries in order to spread the knowledge of the Christian religion."

Though Titus is not expressly called an evangelist, yet, as the work assigned him, and the instructions given to him by the apostle are so similar to those given to Timothy, we are fully justified in considering him as sustaining the same office.

The reader will find this question most satisfactorily settled, in a small work published by Rev. Albert Barnes, of Philadelphia, entitled: "The Scriptural Argument for Episcopacy Examined;" being a reply to Bishop Onderdonk's "Episcopacy Tested by Scripture."

Any one who would see how diocesan Episcopacy bears to be "tested by Scripture," will do well to examine Mr. Barnes' learned and excellent little work.

* Those who would investigate this subject, are referred to the copious notes of Macknight upon the chapter; or the more brief, but judicious remarks of Bloomfield and Doddridge.

that no more full catalogue is anywhere furnished of primitive teachers and helpers, and ecclesiastical persons, than this chapter contains. But an examination of this chapter will, I think, convince any unprejudiced mind that, with the exception of '*teachers*,' these were all ministers *extraordinary*, who were qualified for their work by the special and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit; gifts which ceased with the exigencies of the churches which called them forth. When, therefore, the miraculous *gifts themselves* were withdrawn, it is evident that those who had exercised these gifts would cease, of course, to sustain any official, or special relation to the churches. That these miraculous gifts were early withdrawn from the church is admitted on all hands.

The same view may be taken of another class of church officers mentioned in the New Testament—the *deaconesses*. These were an order of helpers, which the peculiarities of Eastern manners and customs rendered necessary to the primitive churches. Every reader of ancient history must be aware, that in Judea, and indeed, in most oriental countries, familiar social intercourse between the sexes was not allowed. Even to this day, an Eastern lady would regard herself as degraded were she exposed to the gaze of the other sex. Hence the practice of veiling the face; and in some instances even the whole person.

To meet this state of things among the people to whom the gospel was first preached, it became necessary to appoint aged women, usually widows, to administer to the necessities of the female disciples; to visit them in sickness, to distribute among them the charities of the church; and, in various other ways, to minister to their necessities both temporal and spiritual. This service the elders and

deacons of the church could not perform with propriety, owing to the peculiarities of Eastern habits.

To these females, reference is made 1 Tim. 5: 9, 10; "Let not a widow be taken into *the number* (that is, of the *deaconesses*) under threescore years old," etc.

Phebe, spoken of by the apostle, Rom. 16: 1, was one of this number: "I commend unto you (or I introduce to your Christian confidence) Phebe, our sister, which is a *servant* (*διάκονον**—a deacon) of the church at Cenchrea."

From Ecclesiastical history we learn that these deaconesses were set apart to their office by imposition of hands. "Yet we are not to imagine, that this consecration," says Bingham, "gave them any power to execute any part of the sacerdotal office * * . Women were always forbidden to perform any such offices as those." * * "Some heretics, indeed, as Tertullian observes, allowed women to teach, and exorcise, and administer baptism; but all this, he says, was against the rule of the apostle." * * * *

Epiphanius, a Christian father who died about A. D. 403, says: "There is indeed, an order of deaconesses in the church, but their business is not to sacrifice, or perform any part of the sacerdotal office, * * but to be a decent help to the female sex in the time of their baptism, sickness, affliction, or the like."†

Mosheim notices briefly these servants of the church. "There were," says he, "in many churches, and especially in those of Asia, female public servants, or deaconesses." Vol. I. p. 84.

* Pronounced *diaconon;* whence the English *deacon.*

† "Antiquities of the Christian Church," Book II. chap. 22. sect. 7.

If the primitive churches were authorized to ordain these "female public servants, or deaconesses"—which, however, the Scriptures nowhere intimate—it is very obvious that they were, like several other servants of the churches in those days, *extraordinary*, and not designed for permanent church officers; but appointed simply to meet the exigencies of the church in Eastern countries; and consequently, that when these exigencies ceased, or among a people of different habits, the office itself should be discontinued.

Setting aside the apostles, and these spiritual persons, and extraordinary assistants, we have remaining, as constituted and permanent officers in the church of Christ:

1. ELDERS. These were ordained persons, who had the charge of particular churches; and, so far as we are informed, had no ecclesiastical authority in any other church than that "over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers."

The account of the second visit of Paul and Barnabas to the churches of Asia Minor (Acts 14: 21—23) confirms this view. We read: "*And when they had ordained**

* The Greek word here translated "*ordained*," is *χειροτονήσαντες*; from *χείρ* the hand, and *τείνω* to stretch out. Wahl renders the word, "*to vote by holding up the hand*;" and refers to Polybius for authority. Schrevelius gives, as the meaning of the word, "to raise up and extend the hands — *to elect by hand-vote — to vote by holding up the hand.*" Bloomfield, as we might expect, resists this interpretation; but admits that "several of the ablest commentators" adopt it. Doddridge has a long and able note upon this passage: He maintains that the Greek word employed in the text clearly denotes that the elders were elected by a vote of the several churches over which they were respectively placed. In this opinion agree Erasmus, Calvin, and Beza. Dr. John Owen main-

them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." Now, the unavoidable inference from this passage is, that these churches, which were founded by the labors of the apostles, were *each* of them furnished with one elder or more. The number was probably regulated by the size of the church and the circumstances of the elders. It is probable that most of these were men who labored at some trade, or secular business most of their

tains the correctness of this interpretation, with great learning and ability. (Owen's Works, English edition, vol. xx. pp. 415—418.) "*Χειροτονεῖν*," says he, "is the same with *τας χεῖρας αἴρειν* [to raise the hands], nor is it ever used in any other signification." "He," continues Dr. Owen, "is a great stranger unto these things, who knoweth not that among the Greeks, especially the Athenians, from whom the use of this word is borrowed or taken, *χειροτονία* [the act of voting] was an act *ὅλης της ἐκκλησίας*, 'of the whole assembly' of the people in the choice of their officers and magistrates." He quotes from Demosthenes and Thucydides in proof of this. It is clear that this word is employed (2 Cor. 8: 19) to designate such an act of the church—a popular vote. In speaking of Titus, the apostle says: "he was *chosen* (or being chosen) of the churches (*χειροτονηθεὶς ὑπὸ των ἐκκλησιῶν*) to travel with us with this grace;" that is, with the collection made for the relief of the persecuted Christians in Judea. No one can doubt that Titus was chosen by a vote of the church; and as the same word is used in both places, the inference is, that it designates the *same act* in both instances. The old English Bible translates the passage: "*When they had ordained them elders by* ELECTION."

It is not, however, my intention to go at large into a discussion of this question; for whatever may be the meaning of the term *χειροτονήσαντες*, the passage under consideration is decisive upon this point, namely—that the apostolic churches were each furnished with one elder or more; and it was to establish this, that the text was quoted.

Reasons why some churches had more than one elder.

time. Hence the necessity of ordaining *several* elders over a single church if that church was large.

This explanation accounts for the fact, that there were a number of elders connected with the church at Ephesus. See Acts 20: 17—31. Ephesus was a very populous city, containing several hundred thousand inhabitants, and was a great resort for strangers from all parts of the world. Paul had spent three whole years in the city, preaching the gospel with great success. The number of converts must have been large; and the church, consequently, required the labors of several such elders as we suppose were employed in primitive times.*

Another reason for a plurality of elders in the primitive churches, may be found in the fact, that the larger churches, in times of persecution particularly, were compelled to meet in small companies, in private houses and other places of security, in order to worship God unmolested. In this case, each of the assemblies would need an elder to conduct their public services; and thus several overseers would be necessary for a single church of any considerable size. Then again the elders were specially exposed to be cut off by persecution; and if there had been but one

* For some time after the first settlement of New-England, all of the more numerous and wealthy churches, maintained a pastor and a teacher if they could be obtained. The pastor devoted himself to the business of visiting and superintending the affairs of the parish; while the teacher attended to the preparation of discourses for the pulpit, and to the doctrinal instruction of the people.

And both of these officers were entirely supported by the church; and were expected to devote their whole time to their respective duties. Besides these, every church had one or more ruling elders and several deacons; who assisted in the worship, government, and discipline of the church.

Elders the same as pastors, overseers, and bishops.

to a church, the church might have been left destitute of any teacher and overseer.

In proof that the *elders* of the primitive churches were the same order of men who are sometimes called *pastors*, *overseers*, and *bishops*, reference may be made to the epistle of Paul to Titus. In chap. 1st, verse 5th, Paul says to Titus: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting;" that is, the things necessary to the complete organization, and the spiritual improvement of the churches; "and *ordain elders in every city*, as I had appointed thee;" or, as I had previously instructed thee to do.

Paul, it seems, had visited Crete in company with Titus; and their united labors had gathered a number of Christian churches on that island. But, as Paul was pressed for time, and the island was very populous—containing, as it is supposed, one hundred cities and villages—the apostle could not make all the necessary arrangements, and give all the needed instructions for the complete organization of the numerous converts into distinct churches. He therefore left Titus in Crete, with instructions how to proceed in this important work. In the passage just quoted, these instructions are referred to; and some of the more important items in them are recapitulated. One of the most prominent of which was—to "*ordain elders* (πρεσβυτέρους*) in *every city*,"—that is, in every city where there was a church. Or in other words, to supply every church with elders.

This is precisely what the apostle and Barnabas did in the cities of Asia Minor, among which they had been

* Pronounced *Presbuterous;* from whence the English *Presbyters.*

Qualifications of an elder and bishop, the same.

preaching the gospel. See Acts xiv. Having given this general direction "to ordain elders in every city," the apostle next tells Titus what sort of men to select for elders: "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife" [only], "having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly." Then, in the following verse—as if purposely to show that an *elder and a bishop were precisely the same church officer*—he continues: "For, A BISHOP"—*ἐπίσκοπον*,* an inspector, an overseer—"must be *blameless*, as the steward of God;"—that is, of God's house, which is his church—"not self-willed, not soon angry," etc. Here we perceive that the words *elder* and *bishop* are used interchangeably, to designate the same church officer. Nothing can be more clear.

In the same manner are the words used by the Evangelist, in giving an account of Paul's interview with the elders of the church at Ephesus, Acts 20: 17—28, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church"—*τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους*. In the 28th verse the same persons are called *overseers* (or bishops): "Take heed, therefore, unto all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers* (*ἐπισκόπους*, bishops), to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The case is so plain that no one need doubt that the same order of men are called either *elders*, *bishops*, or *overseers*, interchangeably.

The same thing is apparent from the description of a good *bishop*, 1 Tim. 3: 1—7; which answers, exactly, to the requisites of a good *elder*, Tit. 1: 5—9.†

* Pronounced *episcopon;* whence the English, *Episcopacy.*

† The reader who wishes to examine this matter more fully,

Elder—why applied to Christian teachers.

The Greek word (πρεσβύτερος) translated presbyter or elder, means literally *an older*, or *an old man;* being the comparative of πρέσβυς, *old.* The term was originally applied to the heads of the tribes of Israel, and to the members of the Jewish Sanhedrim or high court of the nation. These were generally men advanced in life; and distinguished for sobriety, knowledge, and sound judgment.

The term is applied to the teachers of the Christian church, because these were, at first, selected from the more aged, and experienced, and intelligent converts to Christianity.

The first place in which the term "*elder*" is used in the New Testament to designate a Christian teacher, is Acts 11: 30. "The disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. Which also they did, and sent it to *the elders* by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

We find it in numerous other places, in such connections as to prove, conclusively, that the same order of persons are designated by the term *presbyters* or *elders*—as are at other times, called *bishops*, *overseers*, or *pastors.* The first epistle of Peter 5: 1—4 very clearly illustrates this.

"*The elders* (πρεσβυτέρους) which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder" (or co-elder) * * "*Feed the flock* (ποιμάνατε, act the part of a pastor towards the flock) of God which is among you." Here we have the *pastoral*

and especially, if he would know the sentiments of the fathers of the church, and the English Reformers upon this subject, is referred to Dr. Dwight's Theology, Ser. 150 & 151, and to Prof. Pond's most satisfactory exhibition of the matter, in the 8th chapter of his book on "The Church," and Dr. Campbell's learned Lectures on Ecc. History.

character introduced; the *elders* are spoken of as *pastors;* allusion being made to such passages as Jer. 3: 15; "I will give you *pastors* according to my heart, which shall *feed* you with knowledge and understanding." These *pastors* or *elders* are next described as *bishops*, "taking *the oversight* thereof," [ἐπισκοποῦντες—acting the bishop, overseeing the church], "not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: Neither as being *lords* over God's heritage, but being *ensamples to the flock.* And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Which is as if the apostle had said: The elders or pastors are to act the part of *bishops* in the church. They are to *govern* the church, but not with lordly authority; but rather by the weight of their holy example, and their strict conformity to the directions and spirit of the chief Shepherd and bishop of souls.

How the apostle could teach the identity of the office of presbyter or elder, and bishop or overseer, and pastor and teacher, more fully than he does in this passage, it would be difficult to conceive. Dr. Bloomfield, in his note upon this chapter, seems to admit this identity. His words are: "The apostle now gives particular injunctions to the *presbyters*, i. e. the bishops and pastors of the church."

The titles *pastor* and *teacher* designate "the office-work" of elders or bishops; namely, to guide, and preside over the flock, and to feed it with knowledge and wisdom. Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd and bishop of souls, (1 Pet. 2: 25) and every elder in his church is an under bishop and shepherd, or pastor, of a portion of his flock, 1 Pet. 5: 1—4.

Can anything be made more plain, from Scripture testi-

mony, than the correctness of this doctrine of Congregationalism—that *an elder*, *a pastor*, *a bishop*, *are different titles of the same church officer?*

Dr. Bloomfield himself, though a devoted churchman, is constrained to admit, that "the best commentators, ancient and modern, have, *with reason*, inferred that the terms [elder and bishop] as yet denoted the same thing." (See Bloomfield's New Testament, Acts 20: 17, note.)

If, then, these terms "*as yet*," (that is, during the life time of the apostle) signified the "*same thing*," by what authority are they *now* made to signify *different things?* "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."

Waddington, another Episcopal writer, admits that "it is *even certain*, that the terms *bishop*, and *elder*, or *presbyter* were, in the *first instance*, and for a short period, sometimes used synonymously, and indiscriminately applied to the same order in the ministry." (Wadd. Eccl. Hist. chap. 2. § 2.

If this be an admitted fact, and the soundness of the first principle of Congregationalism be allowed—that the Scriptures, and the authorized practice of the apostolic churches, while under the direction of inspired men, are our safe and only guide in respect to church polity—then, I see not why it must not follow, that elders and bishops are one and the same order of church officers.

"To suppose," says Dr. Owen, "that the apostle doth not intend the same persons and the same office by presbyters and bishops in the same place, is to destroy his argument, and render the context of his discourse unintelligible. He that will say, if you make a justice of peace or a constable, he must be magnanimous, liberal, full of clemency and courage, for so a *king* ought to be, will not be thought

to argue very wisely. Yet, such is the argument here, if by elders and bishops distinct orders and officers are intended." (Works, Vol. XX. p. 395.)

Dr. Campbell says: "That the terms ἐπισκόπος and πρεσβύτερος [bishop and elder] are sometimes used promiscuously in the New Testament, there is no critic of any name who now pretends to dispute." (Lect. 4. p. 66.) "The truth is, ἐπίσκοπος [bishop] was the name of office, πρεσβύτερος [elder] was a title of respect." (Ib.)

* * "One single passage from the apostolical writings has not yet been produced in which it appears from the context, that the two terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος [elder and bishop] mean different offices." (Campbell's Lect. 4. p. 67.)

2. Deacons are the only other permanent church officers, recognized by Congregationalists.

It is true, our puritan fathers recognized an intermediate office, between the elder or *teaching* elder—as they were wont to call the pastor, or teacher of the church—and the deacon; this was the *ruling elder*. In this, however, there was not from the beginning, a perfect agreement among Congregationalists, and the office was gradually dispensed with, until it has ceased to be known in our churches.

Cotton Mather says (Magnalia, Book V. chap. 17): "Another point in the [Cambridge] platform not universally received, is, the *distinct office of ruling elders* * * * There are some who cannot see any such officer as we call a *ruling elder*, directed and appointed in the word of God * * Our churches are now (1702) nearly destitute of such helps in government."*

* Governor Hutchinson, in his "History of Massachusetts Bay,"

Original appointment of deacons.

The original appointment of deacons, is given in Acts 6: 1—6; "In those days, when the number of the disciples

gives the following account of the ruling elder. "Most of the churches—*not all*—had one or more ruling elders. In matters of offence the ruling elder after the hearing, asked the church if they were satisfied; if they were not, he left it to the pastor or teacher to denounce the sentence of excommunication, suspension, or admonition, according as the church had determined.

"Matters of offence, regularly, were first brought to the ruling elder in private, and might not otherwise be told to the church. It was the practice for the ruling elders to give public notice of such persons as desired to enter into church fellowship with them; and of the time proposed for admitting them, if no sufficient objection was offered; and when the time came, to require all persons who knew any just grounds, to signify them.

"When a minister preached to any other than his own church, the ruling elder of the church, after the psalm was sung, said publicly: 'If this present brother have any word of exhortation for the people at this time, in the name of God, let him say on.'

"The ruling elder also read the Psalm.

"When a member of one church desired to receive the sacrament at another, he came to the ruling elder, who proposed his name to the church, for their consent.

"At the communion they sat with the minister.

"They were considered, without doors, as men for advice and counsel in religious matters; they visited the sick; and had a general inspection and oversight of the conduct of their brethren.

"Every thing which I have mentioned, as the peculiar province of the ruling elder; so far as it was in itself necessary or proper, may with propriety enough be performed by the minister.

"It is not strange, therefore, that this office, in a course of years, sunk into an almost entire desuetude in the churches. Indeed, the multiplying unnecessary, and mere nominal offices or officers, whose duties and privileges are not, with certainty, agreed upon and determined, seems rather to have had a natural tendency to discord and contention, than harmony and peace." Vol. I. pp. 426, 427.

was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration;" that is, in the distribution of the charities of the church. "Then the twelve called *the multitude of the disciples* unto them,"—that is, all the professing Christians of the city; or, *the church*,—"and said: It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables"—or, leave the preaching of the gospel to attend to secular business—"Wherefore, brethren, *look ye out among you* seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;"—or set apart, ordain (*καταστήσομεν*) to this work—"but we will give ourselves continually unto prayer and the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the *whole multitude* (*παντὸς τοῦ πλήθους*), and *they chose* Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch. Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them," or in other words, *ordained* them.

The specific object for which these men were selected and ordained, explains the nature of their office, and furnishes a conclusive argument for its perpetuity. The primitive churches were accustomed to take up weekly contributions, for the relief of the widows and the fatherless, and the sick and necessitous among them. See 1 Cor. 16: 1—3. 2 Cor. viii. and ix. 1 Tim. 5: 16. This care of the poor was specially important in times of persecution; when Christians were liable to be stripped of their property, driven from their homes, shut up in prison, and even martyred for the truth. Thus were many families deprived of their supporters; wives were made widows; and children,

orphans. It became, therefore, the imperious duty of the church, for whom these persons suffered, to minister to their necessities. While the Christians were few in number, the apostles and elders could easily take charge of the charities of the churches, and administer to the sufferers; but, when "the number of the disciples was multiplied," the teachers of the church could not do this work without neglecting their appropriate and peculiar business, of feeding and ruling the churches. Under these circumstances, the apostles, acting by divine authority, directed the church at Jerusalem to choose from among themselves a suitable number of persons, who might be set apart to this particular and important business.

That the office of a deacon was not confined to the church at Jerusalem, where it was first introduced, is apparent from the repeated mention of this church officer, in connection with other churches. Thus Paul addresses the "saints at Philippi, with the bishops and *deacons:*" Phil. 1: 1. And in his letter of instructions to Timothy, respecting the proper organization of Christian churches, he expressly specifies the office of the *deacon*, as an important office in the churches of Christ: "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless." See 1 Tim. 3: 1—15.

It is true, that the necessity of "daily ministrations," among the poor of our churches may not be now what it was in apostolic times. But the poor the church will always have among them; for unto the poor the gospel has ever been most succesfully preached; and the poor in

this world are still those whom God hath chosen rich in faith. "Not many rich not many mighty" are yet called unto Congregational churches. And, so long as these things are true, so long will there be occasion for the apostolic deacon.

It is not, however, to be inferred, that the whole office-work of the deacon was confined to the care of the poor. The reason assigned by the apostles for the selection of "the seven," was: "It is not reason (ἀρεστόν, right, fit, proper) that we should leave the word of God," the preaching of the gospel, "*and serve tables:*" διακονεῖν τραπέζαις, "to administer tables; i. e. by implication, to take care of pecuniary affairs." See Wahl's Lexicon.

Now, if it was wrong for the apostles "to leave the word of God to serve tables," it must be equally so for any preacher of the gospel. And, if it is unsuitable for ministers of the gospel to neglect their appropriate work to attend to *pecuniary* affairs, it must be equally unsuitable for them to be cumbered about any secular business; even though connected with the welfare of the church. But every person at all conversant with church affairs is aware, that there are many things of secular character which must be attended to, or the interests of the church materially suffer. This being true of every church, in every age, it is evidently suitable and proper that there should be a permanent church office for "this business." The importance of this office is acknowledged by the *conduct* of those denominations even who deny its existence. No church, it is believed, has found it convenient to dispense with the services of secular agents in church affairs. Some have their church wardens, others their stewards.

Objection to this view of the deacon's office, answered.

Congregationalists prefer to follow apostolic example; and choose as permanent officers, a sufficient number of deacons, who are set apart to the work of serving tables, and in other ways relieving their pastors and assisting their brethren.

It has been objected to this view of the deacon's office, that Stephen and Philip, two of these primitive deacons, were found soon after their ordination, *preaching the gospel;* and one of them, *administering* the *ordinance* of *baptism.* Hence it is inferred, that *a deacon* should be a preaching church officer.

In reply, it may be said, that it is obvious, on the slightest examination of the subject, that the apostles directed the church at Jerusalem to elect deacons for *secular purposes.* "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, etc., whom we may appoint (*καταστήσομεν*, set apart, ordain) over *this business,*" viz. the distribution of the charities of the church, and the necessary secular work connected therewith.

If these deacons were chosen by the church to *preach the gospel,* then, in order to administer the charities of the church and to do other secular work, *they* must have *left* "*the word of God to serve tables,*" as really as the apostles had previously done; or, the evils which their appointment was designed especially to remove, must have remained unremedied: and if so, what was gained by this election of deacons?

But it is asked: "Why need these men be full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, if they were designed merely to superintend the temporalities of the church?" The answer is at hand: Because eminent piety, as well as honesty and wisdom, was necessary to a faithful, fearless, and success-

ful discharge of their official duties, as stewards of the charities of the church, and guardians of its secular interests.

Furthermore, these men were to mingle extensively with the Jewish and heathen population of the city, in their visits from house to house, and in the transaction of their secular business; and by the ignorant and the prejudiced these deacons would be regarded as representatives of the entire Christian church. Hence the necessity that they should be men "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom"—men of eminent piety and devotion to God, tempered with much of that "wisdom which cometh down from above, and is profitable to direct."

Besides this eminence in personal piety, it is by no means unlikely, that "the seven" who were selected for deacons in the Jerusalem church were distinguished among their brethren, for the possession of some of those miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which were early vouchsafed to the church. See 1 Cor. xii. These would be specially valuable to men who were to sustain that relation to the church and the world, which the primitive deacons are supposed to have held.

Whatever this "fullness of the Holy Ghost" was, it was not imparted by the laying on of hands of the apostles*

* It seems evident that the first deacons were *ordained*. For we read: "When they"—the apostles—"had prayed, they *laid their hands upon them*," Acts 6: 6.

Upon this passage Bloomfield remarks: "Selden and Wolf deduce the origin of laying on hands from the age of Moses, adverting to the seven *Seniores*, on whom Moses laid his hands, Num. 27: 18. Hence the custom obtained in the Jewish church, and was thence introduced into the Christian. As laying on of hands had always been used in praying for the good of any person present, in order to show, δειχτικῶς, *for whom* the benefit was entreated;

A third objection—

at the time of the ordination of the deacons, but was possessed by "the seven,"—probably in common with many of their Christian brethren—previously to their ordination. It was, undoubtedly, that full and constant enjoyment of the Divine presence which rendered them eminently holy and wise; and in other respects, peculiarly fitted them for the service assigned them.

But, it is said, that Philip and Stephen certainly exercised the prerogatives of eldership; that they preached the gospel, and one of them administered the rite of baptism.

As it respects Stephen, this is not asserted by the sacred historian. It is said, indeed, that "Stephen did great wonders and miracles among the people;" and, that he "*disputed*" with various opposers of the gospel, Acts 6:

so it was, also, from the earliest ages, a rite of institution to office, which is conferred *by symbol*."

The Cambridge Platform, which contains the articles of "Church discipline, agreed upon by the elders and messengers of the churches, assembled in the synod at Cambridge in New England, Anno 1648"—expressly recognizes the propriety and duty of ordaining deacons. "Church officers," says the Platform, chap. 9, § 1, "are not only to be chosen by the church, but also to be *ordained by imposition of hands and prayer*." In the 6th and 7th chapters of the Platform, the officers of the church are designated; and among them, is the deacon. Its language is as follows: "The office of deacon is instituted in the church by the Lord Jesus. * * The office and work of a deacon is to receive the offerings of the church and gifts given to the church, and to keep the treasury of the church, and therewith to serve the tables which the church is to provide for."

The practice of ordaining these officers has, to some extent, gone into disuse among Congregational churches. It is an important question, however, whether we have not, in this particular, departed from "the right way;" from the doctrine of our fathers, and the example of the apostles.

answered.

8, 9; but all this he might have done while employed in the work of distributing to the necessities of the poor saints.

As he went from house to house on these works of mercy, he was quite as likely to fall in with these Libertines and Cyrenians, and them of Cilicia, and of Asia, with whom he disputed, as he would have been in publicly preaching the gospel.

In respect to Philip, the case is somewhat different. "Philip," we are told, Acts 8: 5, "went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them." But this will not prove that even Philip was *ordained* "*to this business.*" If the fact, that he went down to Samaria and preached the gospel, proves that he was an ordained preacher of the gospel, by the same argument we can prove that the *whole church at Jerusalem* were ordained preachers of the gospel; for it is expressly said, that *all the brethren* of the church at Jerusalem, when driven abroad by the persecution which followed Stephen's martyrdom, preached the gospel. "At that time," says Luke, (Acts 8: 1—4,) "there was a great persecution against *the church* which was at Jerusalem; and they were *all scattered abroad* throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the apostles.* * * * Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where *preaching the word.*" Thus we see that every disciple was a preacher of the word. But who supposes that they were all *ordained* preachers?

It is said, however, that Philip administered the ordinance of baptism; which, even on Congregational principles, a deacon is not authorized to do.

It is true, that Philip did baptize the converts of Samaria and the eunuch of Ethiopia; and it is equally true, that the Holy Ghost authorized him so to do, by the special di-

Answer continued.

rections given to him. He was endowed with the power of working miracles in Samaria, (see Acts 8: 6, 7) and was especially commissioned to disciple the eunuch, as we n from Acts 8: 26—28.

This being the state of the case, could Philip doubt that he was authorized to *baptize* the converts? especially, since Christ had enjoined upon all those whom he had commissioned to "*teach*," the duty of *baptizing* also: — "Go ye and *teach* (or disciple) all nations, *baptizing* them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. 28: 19.

It is not at all unlikely that others of the scattered brethren of the church at Jerusalem performed the same ministerial acts. Wherever they went preaching the word, and the Holy Ghost accompanied their labors, it is highly probable that they administered baptism, and gathered the converts into churches; and, under similar circumstances, any layman of our churches would be authorized to do the same things. This, however, would by no means sanction this course of procedure under *ordinary* circumstances.

Mosheim says: "At first, all who were engaged in propagating Christianity, administered this rite [baptism]; nor can it be called in question, that whoever persuaded any person to embrace Christianity, could baptize his own disciple." Murdock's Mosh. Vol. I. pp. 105—6.

Eusebius, speaking of the eunuch of Ethiopia, says: "Returning into his own country, he is reported to have been the first publisher of the knowledge of the great God, and of the comfortable advent of our Savior in the flesh. And so by him was really fulfilled that prediction of the prophet: 'Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God.'" Ecc. Hist. Lib. II. chap. 1.

Answer continued.

There is the fullest testimony from ecclesiastical writers, that this eunuch established a flourishing church in Ethiopia. (See Doddridge's Exposition on Acts 8: 39, note M.) But we have no intimation that he was ordained to preach the gospel or to administer the ordinances.

Waddington says: "The fairest supposition respecting this question (the separation of the clergy from the laity) appears to be, that the *first* converts, those who spread the earliest tidings of redemption before the apostles themselves had quitted Judea, were commissioned to preach the name and diffuse the knowledge of Christ *indiscriminately*.' Harper's Ed. p. 43.

Dr. Campbell gives a very satisfactory account of the division of the churches into *clergy* and *laity*. Lect. 9. pp. 151—155. He also shows most conclusively, that all the early disciples deemed themselves authorized to preach, and, if necessity required, to baptize, and probably to administer the *eucharist*. This state of things continued, as he supposes, down to the beginning of the *third century*. He quotes *Tertullian*, a writer of the third century, and *Hilary*, of the fourth century, in proof of this. Lect. 4. pp. 62—65.

In addition to what has been already said upon this subject, it ought perhaps to be remarked, that the Scriptures warrant the supposition that Philip, subsequently to his ordination as a deacon, had been set apart to the work of an *evangelist*. That this was not unfrequently done by the primitive churches, is intimated by the apostle (1 Tim. 3: 13): "They that have used the office of a *deacon* well, purchase to themselves *a good degree;*" that is, a higher degree, or office, in the church.

That Philip had been thus promoted, appears from Acts

21: 8. * * "We that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cesarea: and we entered into the house of *Philip the evangelist*, which was one of the *seven*"—deacons.

From whatever point of view we contemplate this subject, we can see no evidence that the primitive deacons were an order of the *clergy;* but rather, that they were substantially like Congregational deacons, chosen and set apart to "*serve tables.*"

That elders and deacons are the *only* officers which Christ designed to have permanently connected with his churches, and that their authority should extend no further than to the particular church which elects them, may readily be inferred from the nature of the case, and from the considerations which have been offered upon the general topics already discussed.

Further confirmation of these doctrines is derived from the address of Paul to the Philippians, 1: 1; "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with *the bishops and deacons.*"

Now, had there been, in the church at Philippi, any other officers than bishops and deacons, would they not have been mentioned by the apostle?* And if there were no other officers in *that* church, what reason have we to suppose there were in *any* of the primitive churches? And, if in none of the *primitive* churches, why should there be in any of our *modern* churches?

* It is worthy of remark, that Polycarp writing to this church more than fifty years after the apostle, mentions the same two officers, and *only* the same, viz. *presbyters* and *deacons.* See extracts from the Apostolic Fathers in this work.

Same subject continued.

In further confirmation of this doctrine, we may refer to Paul's first epistle to Timothy. This was written to give the young evangelist such instructions as would guide him in arranging the affairs of the church at Ephesus; and probably also of the neighboring churches. Among other important items, Paul instructs Timothy how to proceed in the choice and ordination of church officers.

First. In respect to *bishops.* "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of *a bishop*, he desireth a good work. A bishop, then, must be blameless," etc. 1 Tim. 3: 1—6.

Secondly. In respect to *deacons.* "Likewise must the *deacons* be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith, in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: *but, if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*" 1 Tim. 3: 8—15.

It being the special design of the apostle in this epistle, to instruct Timothy how to *behave himself in the church of the living God;* that is, how to order and arrange the affairs of the church;—what errors to oppose, what duties to inculcate, what officers to ordain, and what kind of men

to select;—this being the special object of the apostle in writing to Timothy, it is inconceivable that Paul should have omitted to mention any of the offices or officers which belonged to the church, and which the interests of the church required. *Only two officers* however are named by him BISHOPS and DEACONS. The unavoidable inference is, *that no others were known to the primitive churches as permanent ecclesiastical officers*, and if they had no other church officers, why should we have more?

It may be thought that the subject of church officers has received an undue proportion of attention; but the fact, that the controversy upon church polity mainly turns upon this question, will suggest a sufficient apology for the course I have pursued.*

2. Another doctrine of Congregationalism is, that *there should be an entire ecclesiastical equality among those who sustain the office of elders, pastors,* or *bishops, in the churches.*

We recognize no other superiority among our clergy, than such as is given by age and experience, and eminent piety and learning. All our *pastors* are *bishops;* and all

* The reader who wishes to examine this subject more fully will find many valuable remarks in Macknight's notes on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus; particularly, 1 Tim. 3: and 5: 17, 18; and in Prof. Pond's work, "The Church."

Dr. Bloomfield, in his Notes on the New Test. presents the Episcopal side of the question, as does Bingham, in his Antiquities of the Christian Church, Book II. chaps. 1, 2, 3. Dr. Owen discusses this subject, with his usual ability in the 4th chapter of his learned work, on "The true nature of a Gospel Church and its government." Doddridge's remarks upon many of the texts which have been quoted, will be found candid and learned. The reader will find some of the points ably discussed by Mr. Barnes, in his review of Bishop Onderdonk's Tract on Episcopacy.

our *bishops* are "*pastors and teachers*," and fellow elders. The doctrine of Congregationalists upon this subject, is an unavoidable inference from the principles which have already been considered.

We regard the Scriptures as an infallible guide. These furnish no evidence to our minds, that there were any gradations of rank among the primitive elders. The ministerial gradations which began to appear in the church soon after the death of the apostles, and which at length resulted in the Episcopal plan of government, by diocesan bishops and archbishops, etc.; i. e. by bishops claiming authority over several churches within certain bounds, called *dioceses*, from the Greek διοικήσις,* a jurisdiction or district, and archbishops, claiming authority over the bishops, were probably introduced thus: The larger of the primitive churches, found it necessary (for reasons already assigned) to employ *several* elders in their service. While the simplicity and fervor of their first love continued, there was no difficulty in these elders being co-workers together; there was no envy, nor jealousy, nor strife among them. But as piety declined, it was found necessary to elect one of their number as a moderator in their assemblies, and a superintendent of the affairs of the church. To this presiding elder, the other elders were expected to look for directions in relation to their several duties. This moderator, from being merely a *presiding equal* among his brethren, in process of time, began to claim *official superiority;* and at length, the authority of a *diocesan bishop*; maintaining that bishops, were, jure divino—by Divine authority—a superior order of the ministry. There will be occasion

* Pronounced *dioikesis;* whence the English *diocese*.

Third doctrine—councils have no compulsory power.

to go into this matter more fully, in giving the history of Congregationalism. I merely allude to it in this place, to account for the early existence of other clerical orders in the churches, than are now recognized by our denomination as scriptural.*

3. Another important doctrine, upon which there is a perfect agreement among Congregationalists, is, *that ecclesiastical councils, have no authoritative, or compulsory power* over the churches.

The Congregational doctrine is, that ecclesiastical councils derive all their authority from the churches which are represented in them, the churches themselves being constructively present in the persons of their delegates.†

* The English Reformers admitted no *jure divino* authority in bishops. "Dr. Bancroft, the archbishop's (Whitgift's) chaplain in a sermon at Paul's cross, Jan. 12, 1588, maintained that the bishops of England were a distinct order from priests, and had superiority over them, *jure divino*, and directly from God." "This," says Neal "was new and strange doctrine." Hist. Puritans, Vol. I. p. 480.

† The *pastor* of a church is as truly a *delegate* of the church which sends him, as is the *lay brother* who accompanies his pastor, as a delegate.

If this be true, is it within the prerogative either of the council, or of the church on whose behalf that council meets, to invite unsettled clergymen, "*to sit in council?*" For, what church will these brethren who are "without charge" represent?

Again, Have "stated supplies,"—as those ministers are called who are supplying a particular church, but have not been ordained over it—any right to sit in council at all, unless sent by the church of which they are *members?*

The Cambridge Platform holds the following language upon this point: "Because it is difficult, if not impossible, for many churches to come together in one place, in all their members universally; therefore, *they may assemble by their delegates*, or *messengers;* as

And, as no Congregational church has any authority over a sister church, or power to act for another; consequently, it cannot communicate to its delegates any such power or authority. Councils are called to *advise*, not to make laws for the churches; on the ground, that "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." They have no legislative, or executive power. Their influence is exclusively *moral*. It is such as arises from the combined wisdom of intelligent, unprejudiced, and pious men. "They pretend unto no judicial power, nor any significancy, but what is merely *instructive and suasory*. * * They have no secular arm to enforce any canons. They ask none; they want none."*

Congregationalists hold that the decisions of such councils are of no binding authority whatever, unless the church in reference to which they are made, accepts and adopts these decisions, and thus makes them its own. The churches hold fast the power which Christ has given

the Church at *Antioch* went not *all* to *Jerusalem*, but some select men for that purpose. Because, none are, or should be, more fit to know the state of the churches, nor to advise of ways for the good thereof, than elders; therefore, it is fit that in the choice of the messengers for such assemblies, they (the churches) have special respect unto such; yet, inasmuch as not only Paul and Barnabas, but certain others also, were sent to Jerusalem from Antioch; and when they were come to *Jerusalem*, not only the apostles and elders, but other brethren also, did assemble and meet about the matter; therefore synods [and, upon the same grounds, *all councils*] are to consist both of elders and other church members endued with gifts, and sent by the churches, not excluding the presence of any brethren in the churches, Acts 16: 2, 22, 23." Platform, chap. 16. § 6.

* Mather's Ratio. pp. 172, 173.

them, in Matt. 18: 18, to "open and shut, to bind and loose."

The Consociational form of government adopted by most of the Congregational churches of Connecticut, may, perhaps, be regarded as an exception to the above remarks. In that State there are what are called "*Consociations of Ministers and Churches*," composed of pastors and delegates from all the churches within convenient distances. These are *standing councils*, to which all unsettled difficulties in the churches within their several districts are referred. The decisions of these bodies are final.

This plan of consociation was designed to break up the practice of calling *ex parte** councils. It, accordingly, deprives an aggrieved church member, upon whom a Consociation has passed judgment, of the privilege of calling a council, to examine the correctness of these consociational proceedings. Whereas, in other Congregational churches, if a member has been dealt with by the church unjustly, as he supposes, he may ask the church for a "*mutual council;*" that is, such a council as the parties can mutually agree upon; and if the church refuse, the aggrieved member may call an *ex parte* council; that is, select a council himself from the neighboring churches, and submit his grievances to them.†

Wise and good men have framed and supported this consociational system; and it possesses, apparently, some important advantages over the usual method of calling councils as occasions require. Still, I must regard it as a

* An *ex parte* council is one called by *one* party in a dispute, without the concurrence of the other.

† See Mather's "Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Nov-Anglorum," Article 9.

departure from strict Congregational and scriptural principles; and, of very questionable, if not of dangerous tendency. The principle, that every church is authorized to act authoritatively in all matters of personal concern, is of great importance. Anything tending to undermine this principle, should be deprecated. For this very reason, *all* councils to settle church difficulties, should be avoided as much as possible.

Standing councils, to adjust church difficulties, are a sort of standing invitation to the churches not to adjust their own difficulties. They present also, an additional inducement to the subjects of discipline to reject the decisions of the church, and to prolong the contest, by appealing to the standing council.

It is a serious question, too, whether the churches have the *right* to commit this work to delegated hands;—whether they can perform this Christian duty by proxy. Christ has said of the obstinate offender: "If he hear not *the church*, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Consistently with this direction, the church may take *advice* and *counsel*—for, "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety"—but, to give the power into the hands of a council to "*hear*, *judge*, DETERMINE and FINALLY ISSUE any case," (as the Saybrook articles of discipline expressly do)* seems utterly inconsistent with the "Magna Charta" of Christ's churches.

The correctness of these views is corroborated by the remarks of Mosheim, upon the influence of councils on the primitive churches.

* See Saybrook Articles of Discipline, § VII.

Mosheim's testimony—

Having stated that all the churches in the first centuries "had *equal rights*, and were, in all respects, on a footing of equality," he adds: "Nor does there appear in this century, any vestige of that *Consociation of the churches of the same province, which gave rise to ecclesiastical councils and metropolitans.* Rather, as is manifest, it was not till the second century, that the custom of holding ecclesiastical councils began in Greece, and thence extended into other provinces." Vol. I. p. 86, Murdock's ed.

Again, in speaking of the second century, he says: "During a great part of this century, all the churches continued to be, as at first, *independent* of each other; or, were connected by no *consociations* or confederations.

"Each church was a kind of *little independent republic*, governed by its own laws, which were enacted, or at least sanctioned by the people. But, in process of time, it became customary for all the Christian churches in the same province to unite, and form a sort of larger society or commonwealth; and, in the manner of confederate republics, to hold their conventions at stated times, and there deliberate for the common advantage of the whole confederation. This custom first arose among the Greeks, among whom a [political] confederation of cities, and the consequent convention of their several delegates, had been long known; but afterwards, the utility [?]* of the thing being seen, the custom extended through all countries where there were Christian churches. These conventions of delegates from the several churches, assembled for deliberation, were called by the Greeks *synods*, [from *σύνοδος*, an assembly] and by the Latins, councils [from concilium,

* We shall see, directly, *how useful* these conventions were.

Continued. Waddington's admission.

an assembly] and the laws agreed upon in them, were called canons [from κανών,* a rule], that is, rules.

"These councils, of which no vestige appears before the middle of this century, (i. e. the second) CHANGED NEARLY THE WHOLE FORM OF THE CHURCH. *For, in the first place, the ancient rights and privileges of the people were by them very much abridged; and, on the other hand, the influence and authority of the bishops were not a little augmented.* At first, the bishops did not deny that they were merely the representatives of the churches, and acted in the name of the people; but, by little and little, they made higher pretensions, and maintained that power was given them by Christ himself, to *dictate* rules of faith and conduct to the people. In the next place, the perfect equality and parity of all bishops, which existed in early times, the council gradually subverted. For, it was necessary that one of the confederated bishops of a province, should be intrusted with some authority and power in those conventions, over the others; and hence originated the prerogatives of *Metropolitans.* And lastly, when the custom of holding these councils had extended over the Christian world, and the universal church had acquired the form of a vast republic, composed of many lesser ones, certain head men were to be placed over it in different parts of the world, as central points in their respective countries. Hence came the *Patriarchs*; and ultimately, a *Prince of Patriarchs*—the ROMAN PONTIFF." Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. pp. 142—4. See also, an important note to the the same purport by Dr. Murdock, p. 142, note 2.

Waddington, (Ecc. Hist. p. 44), admits the correctness

* Pronounced *canōn;* hence the words canon and canonical.

of Mosheim's account. He says: "Though these synods, were doubtless indispensable to the well being of Christianity [?] *they seem to have been the means of corrupting the original humility of its ministers.*"

If this be true, and if it be also true that, "like priest, like people," and that like causes tend to like effects—then, I ask, If councils are necessary, are they not "*necessary evils?*" and ought they not to be avoided as much as possible? And if the plan of *Consociation* has occasioned such countless evils in the churches in past ages, ought not we to regard it with a jealous eye? And, is not the doctrine, that no ecclesiastical council shall have any authority to enforce its decisions on the churches, highly important, yea, *essential* to the welfare and independence of the churches?

4. Another doctrine of Congregationalism, is, that *the independency of the several churches adopting this system, does not free them from accountability to each other.*

If a Congregational church is believed to have swerved from the truth, a sister church may call the offender to an account; and, by a committee, or by a correspondence, may labor with, and, if necessary, withdraw fellowship from the erring and obstinate church.* But, in doing this, it is necessary for the complainant to take as nearly as possible, the regular steps enjoined in Matt. 18: 15—18.—The aggrieved party having labored unsuccessfully with the offending church, should next call for the assistance of one or more of the neighboring churches; and, if unsuccessful, either withdraw fellowship immediately, or call a council of neighboring churches, to advise in the case.†

* Mather's Ratio Disciplinae, Art. 9. § 1, 4.

† Cambridge Platf. chap. 15. Also Upham's "Ratio Disciplinae," pp. 174, 206.

Communion of churches, how exercised.

Does not this rule forbid a Congregational church to exclude from occasional communion, any member of regular standing in a sister church, though supposed to be an unworthy member, until the regular disciplinary steps have been taken with the church, for retaining such a member, as this would be a virtual exclusion from fellowship of the church itself?

Upon this general subject, the Cambridge Platform (chap. 15) says: "Although churches be distinct, and therefore may not be confounded one with another, and equal, and therefore, have no dominion one over another; yet, all the churches ought to preserve church communion one with another, because they are all united unto Christ, not only as a mystical, but a political head, whence is derived a communion suitable thereunto.

"The communion of churches is exercised sundry ways."

1. "By way of mutual care, in taking thought for one another's welfare." * * 2. "By way of consultation one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgment and council of other churches." * * 3. "By way of admonition," when a church neglects discipline or becomes corrupt. * * 4. By admitting members of sister churches to occasional communion with one another. 5. By letters of recommendation or dismission from one church to another. * * 6. By affording "relief and succor one unto another," either of able members to furnish them with officers, or of outward support to the necessities of poorer churches as did the churches of the *Gentiles* contribute liberally to the poor saints at *Jerusalem*. *

* The following document from Hutchinson's History of Mass. Bay, Vol. I. pp. 420, 421, illustrates the nature of the fellowship

Fellowship of the churches, maintained by the fathers of N. E.

The mutual relation and the fellowship of the churches, was strenuously maintained by the fathers of New England. They abhorred any such independency, as excused

which existed among the churches previous to the more perfect organization of the Congregational churches, by the synod of 1648.

"We may see," says Gov. Hutchinson, "something of the relation the churches considered themselves in, one to another, before the platform of 1647 [1648?] by the following letter from the church in Salem to the church in Dorchester.

"*Salem* 1*st*, 5 *mo.* 39.

"Rev. and dearly beloved in the Lord. We thought it our bounden duty to acquaint you with the names of such persons as have had the great censure passed upon them in this our church, with the reasons thereof, beseeching you in the Lord, not only to read their names in yours, but also to give us the like notice of any dealt with in like manner by you, that so we may walk towards them accordingly; for some of us, here, have had communion ignorantly, with some of other churches, 2 Thess. 3: 14. We can do no less than have such noted as disobey the truth.

Roger Williams and his wife,
John Throgmorton and his wife,
Thomas Olney and his wife,
Stukely Westcot and his wife,
Mary Holiman and widow Reeves.

These wholly refused to hear the church, denying it, and all the churches in the Bay, to be true churches, and (except two) are all rebaptized.

"John Elford, for obstinacy, after divers sins he stood guilty of and proved by witness.

"William James, for pride and divers other evils, in which he remained obstinate.

"John Tolby, for much pride and unnaturalness to his wife, who was lately executed for murdering her child.

"William Walcot, for refusing to bring his children to the ordinances, neglecting willingly family duties, etc.

"Thus, wishing the continued enjoyment of both the staves, beauty and bands, and that your souls may flourish as watered gardens, rest,

Yours in the Lord Jesus,

HUGH PETERS, *by the church's orders and in their name.*"

a church from giving account of itself—its doctrines and its practice—to all in fellowship with it. And this feature of the system, has been tenaciously held by all consistent Congregationalists, to the present time.

I have now finished an enumeration and brief explanation of those doctrines relating to church polity which are believed, the most essential doctrines of the orthodox Congregationalists of New England. There is, upon these several points, a very general, if not an entire agreement among us; with the exceptions which have been noticed. There may be, it is true, even *allowed* deviations from these Congregational doctrines, in the practice of individual churches; arising from ignorance or disregard of our polity; but intelligent and consistent Congregationalists admit, practice, and most cordially approve of all the doctrines which have now been considered.

These were the doctrines which the fathers of New England so fondly loved and cherished; and in the maintenance of which, they endured persecution in their native land, the perils of the ocean, and the privations and hardships of the wilderness.*

* The sentiments of our fathers are well expressed in the following extract from "The Magnalia:"

"I have heard," says Cotton Mather, "an aged saint near his death, cheerfully thus express himself: 'Well, I am going to heaven, and will there tell the faithful, who are gone long since from New England, thither, that though they who gathered our churches are all dead and gone, yet the churches are yet alive, with as numerous flocks of Christians as were ever among them.'" "If," adds the pious historian, "he could, in every respect, say, as *gracious*, what joy unto all the saints in *heaven* and in *earth*, might be from thence occasioned!" Vol. I. p. 83.

Why the fathers of N. England loved Congregationalism.

It was not, however, their love of rites, and forms, and ceremonies, in the worship of God; it was not their attachment to any one mode, in itself considered, that made them so willing to sacrifice the endearments of home, and the enjoyments of cultivated society; but, it was their love for *the church of Christ*, the welfare of which they considered identified with the maintenance of Congregationalism,—it was this that brought them hither. They loved pure religion; and regarding Congregationalism as best adapted to propagate, and maintain the institutions of religion in their purity, they cherished *this system* with self-denying, self-sacrificing fondness. It was not the casket itself which they so much valued; but the casket, as a necessary protection to the pearl of great price which it contained. It was not the form of godliness, which they so much admired; but the power, which accompanied that form. In a word, it was not Congregationalism in itself considered, which our fathers so devotedly loved and cherished; but Congregationalism as the form of church government which Christ had fixed upon as best adapted to promote the interests of his kingdom and the glory of his name.

While, therefore, we approve, and even admire the fair *model* of a Christian church which our fathers have constructed in this New World, let us not forget the *spirit* which of old dwelt in the New England churches. And never forget, that it will be in vain that we cry: "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these!" if the presence of the Lord dwell not in his temple.

Let it never be forgotten, that Congregationalism is a spiritual system of church government. It is designed for, and adapted to spiritual persons; those who have been

taught, and are now led by the Spirit. Its strength and permanence depend on the spirituality of those who adopt it. It controls them by no other power than that which is moral; it inflicts no other pains and penalties. It can live and prosper only in the smiles of heaven. Without the Divine presence our churches cannot be governed. Without this, they must fall to pieces, or they must dwindle away and die. Of all denominations we are most entirely cast upon Providence. Without Christ we can do nothing.

These facts, while they furnish strong presumptive evidence of the correctness of our principles and doctrines relating to church polity, suggest a powerful argument to the mind of every Congregationalist, why he should be holy—why he should labor to promote the holiness of all about him.

PART III.

TESTIMONY OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

It will be seen from the preceding pages of this work, that Congregationalists profess to derive their principles and doctrines from the sacred Scriptures; that Jesus Christ is regarded as the author of their church polity; and the apostles, as the builders of the first Congregational churches. In this belief they feel themselves fully sustained by the passages already quoted from the Evangelists and the apostles, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and whose movements, in organizing the first Christian churches, had the sanction of the Great Head of the church.

Though our chief dependence is upon these inspired guides, and nothing is received by us as truth which is contrary to these, still, it is pleasant to find the correctness of our interpretation of the Scriptures confirmed by the testimony of ancient, though uninspired history. We are not disposed to maintain, that all the doctrines and practices of the primitive churches were perfectly correct —for we know that even during the life time of the apostles, errors did creep into these churches—but, we do suppose, that the general Order and Discipline of these churches remained substantially the same, for many years after their organization.

From ecclesiastical history, we may learn what their order and discipline were.

Some passages from Mosheim have already been given.

Mosheim's view of church order, etc. in the first century.

For the information of such of my readers as have not access to that standard work, I shall quote somewhat freely, from that learned and impartial historian. His view of the facts is the more valuable, as, being himself a *Lutheran*, he had no partialities for the Congregational system.

His *opinions* of what is now best, must go for what they are worth; his *facts*, alone, are authoritative.

Under the general head of "History of the Teachers, and of the Government of the Church," in the *first century*, Mosheim says:

"As to the external *form* of the church, and the mode of governing it, neither *Christ* himself nor his apostles gave any express precepts. We are, therefore, to understand, that this matter is left chiefly to be regulated as circumstances may from time to time require, and as the discretion of civil and ecclesiastical rulers shall judge expedient.*

"*If however, what no Christian can doubt, the apostles of Jesus Christ acted by divine command and guidance, then, that form of the primitive churches, which was derived from the church at Jerusalem, erected and organized by the apostles themselves, must be accounted divine;* yet, it will not follow, that this form of the church was to be perpetual and unalterable.*

"In these primitive times each Christian church was composed of the *people*, the *presiding officers*, and the *assistants* or *deacons*. These *must be* the component parts of every society. *The highest authority was in* THE PEOPLE, OR, THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRISTIANS; *for even the apostles themselves inculcated by their example, that nothing*

* The dissent of Congregationalists from these views has been noticed, pp. 13—21.

Highest authority in the people, or the church as a body.

*of any moment was to be done or determined on, but with the knowledge and consent of the brotherhood.** Acts 1: 15. 6: 3. 15: 4. 21: 22. And this mode of proceeding, both prudence and necessity required, in those early times.

"*The assembled people, therefore, elected their own rulers and teachers;* or, by their authoritative counsel, received them, when nominated to them. *They also, by their suffrages, rejected or confirmed the laws*, that were proposed by their rulers, in their assemblies; *they excluded profligate and lapsed brethren, and restored them; they decided the controversies and disputes that arose; they heard and determined the causes of presbyters and deacons;* in a word, THE PEOPLE DID EVERYTHING THAT IS PROPER FOR THOSE IN WHOM THE SUPREME POWER OF THE COMMUNITY IS VESTED. All their rights the people paid for, by supplying the funds necessary for the support of the teachers, the deacons, and the poor, the public exigencies, and unforeseen emergencies.

"The rulers of the church were denominated, some-

* Waddington, an Episcopal historian, admits the correctness of this. His words are: "It is also true that in the earliest government of the first Christian society, that of Jerusalem, *not the elders only, but the 'whole Church' were associated with the apostles:*" * * In a note he adds:—"still, of course, with some degree of subjection to apostolic authority. This according to Mosheim, was the model of all the primitive churches." Ecc. Hist. p. 41. Harpers' Edit. Neander in a learned and elaborate treatise on "the Primitive Christian church," distinctly maintains this doctrine—that the whole church took part in the government of the same. See a translation in the Bibl. Repository, Vol. IV. pp. 255, 256, 265.

The learned Dr. Campbell, a Presbyterian divine, takes the same ground, in his Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. Lect. 3. pp. 31—33.

Presbyters, elders and bishops, the same church officers.

times *presbyters* or *elders;*—a designation borrowed from the Jews, and indicative, rather of the *wisdom*, than the *age* of the persons;—and sometimes, also, *bishops; for, it is most manifest, that both terms are promiscuously used in the New Testament* of one and the same class of persons.* Acts. 20: 17, 28. Phil. 1: 1. Tit. 1: 5, 7. 1 Tim. 3: 1. These were men of gravity and distinguished for their reputation, influence, and sanctity. 1 Tim. 3 : 1, etc. Tit. 1. 5, etc. From the words of Saint Paul (1 Tim. 5: 17) it has been inferred that some elders *instructed* the people, while others served the church in some other ways. But this distinction between *teaching* and *ruling elders*, if it ever existed (which I will neither affirm nor deny) was certainly, not of long continuance; for *St. Paul* makes it a qualification requisite in *all* presbyters, or bishops, that they be able to teach and instruct others. 1 Tim. 3: 2, etc.

"In this manner Christians managed ecclesiastical af-

* This is also admitted by Waddington. His words are: "It is even certain that the terms bishop and elder, or presbyter were, in the first instance, and for a short period, sometimes used synonymously, and indiscriminately applied to the same order in the ministry." Ecc. Hist. p. 41. And again, in a note, he says: "Such is the plain interpretation of the Scripture passages."

This, many other prominent Episcopalian writers have been constrained to admit, as Dr. Reynolds, Prof. of Divinity in Oxford, Dr. Holland, King's Prof. of Divinity at Oxford, Bishop Burnet, Archdeacon Paley, etc. See Dwight's Theology, Ser. 141; Encyclop. of Relig. Knowledge, Art. Bishop, and the following pages of this work.

Even Milner is compelled, though apparently with reluctance, to admit, that "at first indeed, or for some time, at least in some instances, church governors were only of two ranks, presbyters and deacons." Ecc. Hist. Cent. II. chap. 1. Neander agrees with Mosheim, pp. 254, 255.

How a distinction between these ch. officers was introduced.

fairs, so long as their congregations were small, or not very numerous. Three or four presbyters, men of gravity, and holiness, placed over those little societies, could easily proceed with harmony, and needed no head or president. But, when the churches became larger, and the number of presbyters and deacons, as well as the amount of duties to be performed increased, it became necessary that the council of presbyters should have a *president;* a man of distinguished gravity and prudence, who should distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and be, as it were, the central point of the whole society. He was at first denominated *the Angel* (Rev. 2: 3); but afterwards, *the bishop;* a title of Grecian derivation, and indicative of his principal business, (that is, an *overseer*). It would seem, that the church of *Jerusalem* when grown very numerous, after the dispersion of the apostles among foreign nations, was the *first* to elect such a president; and, that other churches, in process of time, followed the example.

"*But, whoever supposes that the bishops of the first and golden age of the church, corresponded with the bishops of the following centuries, must blend and confound characters that are very different.* FOR IN THIS CENTURY AND THE NEXT, A BISHOP HAD CHARGE OF A SINGLE CHURCH,* *which might, ordinarily, be contained in a private house;* NOR WAS HE ITS HEAD, BUT WAS IN REALITY ITS MINISTER OR SERVANT; he instructed the people, conducted all parts

* Waddington admits this. He says: "The government of a *single person* protected *each society* from internal dissensions—the *electiveness* of that governor rendered probable his merit." p. 44.

The reader will find in the Appendix, No. 7, a valuable extract from Mather's learned apology, containing the testimony of several of the Fathers, respecting the right of the primitive churches, to elect their own officers.

City bishops acquired an influence over country churches. How?

of public worship, attended on the sick and necessitous, in person; and what he was unable thus to perform, he committed to the care of the presbyters; but without *power to ordain or determine anything, except with the concurrence of the presbyters and the brotherhood.*

"It was not long, however, before the extent of the Episcopal jurisdiction was enlarged. For the bishops who lived in the cities, either by their own labors or by those of their presbyters, gathered new churches in the neighboring villages and hamlets; and these churches continuing under the protection and care of the bishops, by whose ministry or procurement they received Christianity, ecclesiastical provinces were gradually formed, which the Greeks afterwards called *dioceses.** The persons to whom

* Dr. Bloomfield, in his note on Eph. 4: 11, seems to admit the correctness of this account. "It is thought," says he, "that the ποιμένες [pastors] were those who had the more important pastoral charges in cities and large towns; the διδάσκαλοι [teachers], the smaller ones. * * Thus it would happen, that *the city* ποιμένες would have an *influence* with, and then, an *authority* over the *country* pastors. Hence, gradually, their offices would vary and become distinct; the ποιμένες [or city pastors] first discharging all the ordinary pastoral duties; and afterwards, when they became regarded as *superintendents*—and were then styled ἐπίσκοποι [that is, overseers, or superintendents] they either discharged them or not, according to circumstances."

Dr. Campbell, in his learned Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, gives substantially the same account. Lect. 8. pp. 130—136. Phil. ed. 1807.

The same learned Presbyterian divine holds the following language respecting the *independency* of the early churches: * * "The different congregations, with their ministers, seemed, in a great measure, *independent of one another. Everything regarding their own procedure in worship, as well as discipline, was settled*

All the primitive churches independent bodies.

the city bishops committed the government and instruction of these village and rural churches, were called *rural bishops* or *chorepiscopi* (τῆς χώρας ἐπίσκοποι, episcopi rurales, seu villani), that is, bishops of the suburbs and fields. They were an intermediate class between the bishops and presbyters; being inferior to the former [because subject to them] and superior to the latter, [because intrusted with discretionary and perpetual power, and performing nearly all the functions of bishops].

"ALL THE CHURCHES IN THOSE PRIMITIVE TIMES WERE INDEPENDENT BODIES; or none of them subject to the jurisdiction of any other. For, though the churches which were founded by the apostles themselves, frequently had the honor shown them, to be consulted in difficult and doubtful cases; yet, they had no judicial authority, no control, no power of giving laws. On the contrary, *it is clear as the noon-day, that all Christian churches had equal rights, and were, in all respects on a footing of equality.*" Mosheim, Vol. I. pp. 80—86.

among themselves. But it is extremely plain, that a total independency was not adapted to the more general character that belonged to all as members of the commonwealth of Christ." Lect. 9. p. 142.

The reader will not fail to remark, that this is precisely what Congregationalists maintain. Each Congregational church is complete, and independent, "regarding its own procedure in worship, as well as discipline," while it maintains a sisterly relation to other members of the Congregational family. We abhor all such independency as would lead us to refuse to give account to our sister churches. So said our fathers, and so say we. Dr. Campbell refers to the first council at Jerusalem, about circumcision and other Jewish ceremonies, to illustrate the nature of "the correspondence and intercourse with one another," which the early Christian churches maintained. The very case to which the framers of the Cambridge Platform refer: Chap. 15. sec. 2.

Prim. churches, Congregational. Second cent., form unaltered.

If this was not genuine Congregationalism—if we have not in these extracts, some of the *fundamental* and *distinctive* principles and doctrines, of this system—then, must I confess my utter ignorance of what constitutes Congregationalism.

What follows, will explain how this primitive church polity was gradually undermined, and finally destroyed.

In giving an account of the government of the church during the *second century*, Mosheim remarks: "The form of church government which began to exist in the preceding century, was, in this, more industriously established and confirmed in all its parts. *One president*, or *bishop*, presided over each church. *He was created by the common suffrage of the whole people.*† * *

"During a great part of this century, all the churches continued to be, as at first, *independent* of each other; or, were connected by no consociations or confederations." Vol. I. p. 142.

Under the *third century*, Mosheim continues,—"Although the ancient mode of church government seemed, in general, to remain unaltered, yet there was a gradual deflection from its rules, and an approximation towards the form of a monarchy. For the bishops claimed much higher authority and power than before, and encroached more and more upon the rights, not only of the brotherhood, but also of the presbyters. And, to give plausibility to these usurpations, they advanced new doctrines concerning the church, and the episcopal office: which, how-

† Milner admits this: "Undoubtedly," says he, "the choice of bishops devolved on *the people*." Vol. 1. p. 471. ed. Boston 1809. Bingham testifies to the same purpose. See the 7th chap. of Prof. Pond's work "*The Church*." Neander gives the same view. See also Appendix, No. 7.

In the third century, deflection begins to appear.

ever, were so obscure, for the most part, that it would seem they did not themselves understand them. * *

"This change in the form of ecclesiastical government, was followed by a corrupt state of the clergy. For, although examples of primitive piety and virtue were not wanting, yet many were addicted to dissipation, arrogance, voluptuousness, contention, and other vices. * * * Many bishops now affected the state of princes, and especially those who had charge of the more populous and wealthy congregations; for they sat on thrones, surrounded by their ministers and other ensigns of their ghostly power, and perhaps also, dazzled the eyes and the minds of the populace with their splendid attire. The *presbyters* imitated the example of their superiors, and neglecting the duties of their office, lived in indolence and pleasure. And this emboldened the *deacons* to make encroachments upon the office and prerogatives of the presbyters. And from this cause especially, in my opinion, the *minor orders* * of clergy were everywhere in this century added to the bishops, presbyters, and deacons." * * * Vol. I. pp. 201, 202.

Waddington says (p. 85.): "We have already described the *free* and *independent* constitution of the primitive church; the bishops and teachers were chosen by the clergy and people; the bishop managed the ecclesiastical affairs of his *diocese* [which was a single church] in coun-

* By "the minor orders of clergy," Mosheim means, the *Subdeacons;* who were considered a grade below the deacons; the *Acolythi*, or young persons who attended the bishops as waiters; the *Ostiarii*, or door-keepers; *Lectors*, or those who read the portions of Scripture for the day; *Exorcists*, or persons professing the power to expel evil spirits; and *Copiatae*, or persons employed in burying the dead.

cil with the presbyters, and '*with a due regard to the suffrages of the whole assembly of the people.*'" * * *

It is apparent from the extracts, which have now been given, that the leading principles, and doctrines of Congregationalism were recognized by the primitive churches of Christ, until they became "wise above what is written," and attempted *improvements* on the work of Christ and his apostles. The simplicity of the primitive *faith*, and the simplicity of the primitive *church order* and *discipline* fell together. The increase of philosophers and learned men, in the church, subverted *the former;* and the introduction of the princes and nobility, overthrew *the latter*.

Influence of Constantine.

Constantine the Great was the principal agent in overturning that primitive church polity, which we have been contemplating. "While he suffered the church to continue to be, as before, a sort of republic within, he assumed to himself the supreme power over this sacred republic; and the right of modeling and controlling it as would best subserve the public good."* Though for a while, the ancient rights and privileges of the people to elect their own church officers, and to regulate the *internal* affairs of their respective churches, were recognized, it was not long before these rights and privileges were encroached upon, and finally destroyed, by the bishops; who, says Mosheim, "controlled everything at their discretion." The churches became subject to the bishops, and the bishops themselves, to the emperor as the head of the church.

* Mosheim, Vol. 1. p. 280.

Church modified to suit the State.

The church and the state being thus united when Constantine thought that it would secure the stability of his throne and the interests of his government, to change the laws, and alter the "dispositions and divisions of the Commonwealth," it became necessary, in his judgment, to adapt the *church* to this modification of the *state*. "In lieu of the ancient republican distinctions, says Tytler, which were founded chiefly on personal merit, a rigid subordination of rank and office now went through all the orders of the state. The magistrates were divided into three classes, distinguished by the unmeaning titles of (1) the Illustrious; (2) the Respectable; (3) the Clarissimi."

To secure the desired uniformity between the ecclesiastical and political estates, the bishops of the four principal cities in the Roman Empire—Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople—were made *ecclesiastical nobles*. "These," says Mosheim, "answered to the four *prctorian* prefects created by Constantine." Next came the *exarchs*, answering to the *prefect* or civil governor, who had the ecclesiastical control of several provinces; next in order, stood the *metropolitans*, who governed single provinces; then followed the *archbishops*, who had in charge certain districts of country; the *bishops* brought up the rear, more or less confined in their authority according to circumstances.* "The number of bishops at this time,"

* Dr. Murdock in a note upon Mosheim, suggests that there were, in fact, only *four* orders of clergy; that the *exarchs* were only chiefs *among* the metropolitans and not *over* them—that they were, indeed, metropolitans or archbishops. For a particular account of the divisions referred to in the text, consult Dr. M's note, Vol. I. pp. 282, 283.

says Waddington, "was *one thousand eight hundred.** In this whole body the bishop of Rome possessed a sort of indeterminate precedence, and preeminence, unattended by any other authority; and this precedence is attributed, first, to the imperial name of Rome: and next, to the superiority in wealth, which he seems to have acquired at a very early period: to the splendor and extent of religious administration, and the influence naturally arising from these causes."

The church thus remodeled—shorn of her primitive simplicity and beauty—decked with honors, and enriched with imperial gold, was like David in the armor of Saul. This union of church and state was fatal to the purity and independency of the churches. The pastoral crook gave place to the insignia of metropolitan pride. Ambition and lust of power—strife for the supremacy—corruption in manners and doctrine, rapidly overspread the Christian church; upon her walls was soon written—"Ichabod!"

Before the close of this century, we hear of fighting and bloodshed, and house-burning, by the contending parties of rival candidates for the bishopric of Rome.

Dr. Campbell, speaking of the rights of the people at this time, says: "The only vestige that remained of their former rights was, that in several places they continued to assemble tumultuously at the election of a bishop. But as this affair was generally conducted with riot and clamor, and sometimes ended in blood, the principles of sound policy required, that a practice so fruitful of bad conse-

* A satisfactory testimony to the *parochial*, *pastoral* character of the *bishops* of the fourth century. And, near the commencement of the following century, we have the testimony of Augustine, that in Africa alone, there were 900 *bishops;* though there were not half that number of cities.

quences, and so barren of good, should be abolished. It was not now, as formerly, a single congregation choosing their own pastor, who was to have the immediate charge of their spiritual instruction and guidance, but it was a mob, often a most outrageous one, collected from a whole diocese or province, to nominate a great man, better known by his extensive jurisdiction and splendid titles, than by any pastoral duties he had to exercise." Lect. Ecc. Hist. 8. p. 137.

Testimony of the Apostolic Fathers.

The general representations of the order and discipline of the apostolic and primitive churches, which have been given in the preceding pages, are confirmed by the writings of the most ancient Fathers of the church ;* and by various incidental notices and statements of writers of a later period.

Among the earliest and most valued pieces of antiquity is the epistle of Clement; written in the name of the church at Rome, to the church at Corinth, somewhere about A. D. 64—70.

The main design of this epistle seems to be to set before the Corinthian church, the impropriety and sin of suffering a few " ringleaders"—who are called " foolish and inconsiderate men"—so far to influence the church, as to induce them to disregard their spiritual guides and rulers ;

* The *Apostolic Fathers*, or those who were contemporary with the apostles, were Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp. *The Fathers of the church*, include all the Christian writers between the *second* and the *sixth* century—some say, *twelfth* century.

1. To the Congregational character of the primitive churches.

and even to "cast off those from their ministry, or bishopric, who had holily, and without blame, fulfilled the duties of it."

The whole epistle is too long—occupying thirty-six octavo pages—to be quoted entire: besides much of it is occupied with matter not relevant to the subject under consideration. The epistle may be found in a work entitled "*The Apostolical Fathers*, translated and published by *William* [Wake] *Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*." Republished, New York 1810.

I will arrange under distinct heads the testimony of this venerable and admired writer, respecting the primitive order and discipline of the churches.

1. The first point established by this epistle is, that in Clement's time (as late as A. D. 64—70), the churches retained their *Independent*, *Congregational* organization.

The address, or salutation of the epistle goes to show this. It runs thus: "*The* church of God which is (or which *sojourneth*) *at Rome*, to *the* church of God which *is at Corinth*, elect, sanctified by the will of God through Jesus Christ our Lord: grace and peace," etc.

Here we have two distinct and complete churches spoken of; the one *at* or *sojourning* at, Rome; the other, at Corinth. The language employed is precisely what one Congregational church in these days would use, when addressing another.

In other places, Clement speaks of their "doing with *one consent* what is good and pleasing" (§21) and of the churches "being conscientiously *gathered together*, in concord with one another." Which goes to show that the church consisted of a single congregation only, which was accustomed to assemble together for church purposes.

2. Another point established by this epistle is, that *the churches were composed of visible, professed saints.*

The church at Corinth, is called—"*the church of God,*" "*elect, sanctified by the will of God, through* [faith in] *Jesus Christ, our Lord.*" Mention is made of "the firmness of their *faith,* and its *fruitfulness* in all good works," of their "*religion in Christ*" and "*certain knowledge of the Gospel:*" they are said to have "walked according to the laws of God," etc. § 1; they are called "*the flock of Christ,*" § 54; and the church, "*the sheep-fold of Christ,*" § 57.

If such was the constituted character of the *Corinthian* church, we may reasonably infer that of such materials were *all* the churches of that time composed.

3. Clement speaks of the *disciplinary power of the churches.*

"Beloved, the *reproof and the correction which we exercise towards one another,* is good and exceeding profitable: for it unites us more closely to the will of God." § 56.

He nowhere intimates that the church had not authority to discipline, even its *ministers*; he only complains that they had abused their power, by casting out holy and faithful ministers, instead of such as deserved to be cast off.

4. Another point, in the order of the primitive churches, to which this epistle bears testimony, relates to the *number and character of church officers, the authority which they possessed, and the part which the church had in the institution of their own officers.*

"The apostles," says the venerable Clement, "have preached to us from our Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ, from God. Christ, therefore, was sent by God, the apostles by Christ; so both were orderly sent according to the

will of God. For having received their command, and being thoroughly assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1 : 5), and convinced by the word of God, with the fulness of the Holy Spirit, they went abroad, publishing, 'that the kingdom of God was at hand.' And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first fruits of their conversions [that is, the first converts, and consequently the most experienced Christians] to be BISHOPS and DEACONS, *over such as should afterwards believe, having first proved them by the Spirit.* Nor was this any new thing, seeing that long before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture in a certain place: 'I will appoint their *overseers* [bishops] in righteousness, and their *ministers* [deacons] in faith.' Is. 60: 17.

"And what wonder if they to whom such a work was committed by God in Christ, established *such officers* as we before mentioned; when even that blessed and faithful servant in all his house, Moses, set down in the Holy Scriptures all things that were commanded him."

After alluding to the "emulation among the tribes concerning the priesthood," and the measures adopted by Moses to quell the rising strife, by referring the matter to God, who caused Aaron's rod of all the twelve, to blossom,—Clement proceeds:

"What think you beloved? did not Moses before know what should happen? Yes, verily: but to the end there might be no division, nor tumult in Israel, he did in this manner, that the name of the true and only God might be glorified: to him be honor for ever and ever—Amen.

"So likewise our apostles knew by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there should contentions arise upon the account of

Testimony of Clement continued.

the ministry, or the name of the bishopric, [or, as Dr. Owen renders it—'about the name of episcopacy,' that is, episcopacy itself.] And therefore, having a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed persons, as we have before said, and then gave direction, how when they should die, other chosen and approved men should succeed in the ministry. Wherefore we cannot think that those may be justly thrown out of their ministry, who were either appointed by them, or afterwards chosen by other eminent men, *with the consent* [or choice] *of the whole church* (*συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησιάς πάσης*); and who have with all lowliness and innocency ministered to the flock of Christ in peace, and without self-interest; and were for a long time commended by all. For it would be no small sin in us, should we cast off those from their ministry, (or bishopric) who holily, and without blame, *fulfil the duties of it.* Blessed are those priests who, having finished their course before those times [when churches are so fastidious and contentious] have obtained a fruitful and perfect dissolution; for they have no fear, lest any should turn them out of the place [heaven], which is now appointed for them. But we see how you have put out some, who lived reputably among you, from the ministry, which by their innocence they had adorned."

This most interesting and remarkable passage establishes several points. (1) That *bishops* and *deacons* were the only officers known in the churches of Christ in the days of Clement,—thirty or forty years after Christ. For surely, if there had been any others known to those primitive churches, Clement would not have written as he did.

(2) That "*the consent of the whole church*" was obtained to the appointment of these officers over the church.

(3) That the apostles, foreseeing that contentions would arise respecting the nature of the ministerial office, left particular directions "*how* when *they*—that is, the *elders*, or bishops, which were ordained over the churches during the life-time of the apostles—should die, other chosen and approved men should succeed in the ministry." These directions, we have in their sacred writings, and in the example of the churches founded by them. From both of which we learn, that approved men were to be chosen and set apart to the ministry, "*with the consent of the whole church.*"

(4) That the apostolic and primitive churches had the power to discipline, and even to cast off their ministers—their bishops.

This the Corinthians had done. And Clement nowhere intimates that they had not a perfect right so to do, but only complains that they had not exercised their authority in a judicious and Christian manner—that they had exercised it upon men who deserved their *confidence* and *love*, and not their *censure*.

Such is the testimony of Clement, the disciple of Peter, the "*almost-apostle*" of the apostolic church; the man of whom Paul makes mention (Phil. 4: 3) as one whose name is written in the "*Book of Life*"—such is Clement's testimony to the order and discipline of the apostolic and primitive churches. Dr. Campbell says of this epistle: "nothing that is not Scripture, can be of greater authority in determining a point of fact, as is the question about the constitution of the apostolic church." Lect. 4. p. 72.

The epistle of Polycarp stands next in order. This was written about the year of our Lord 108—17,* and is ad-

* Owen places it about 108; Wake, 116—117.

Continued.

dressed "To the church of God which is at Philippi," or, which *sojourneth at* Philippi, (τῇ παροικούσῃ Φιλίπποις). The church is addressed as consisting of persons who had "*the root of faith*" *remaining firm in them.* § 1.

Polycarp speaks not as one having authority; but apologizes for writing to the Philippians, by alluding to the fact that they had desired it. "These things, my brethren, I took not the liberty to write unto you concerning righteousness, but you yourselves before encouraged me to it." § 3.

He then goes on to speak of the duties of the whole church; after this follows: "Also the *deacons* must be blameless before him, as the ministers [or servants] of God in Christ and not of men." He then tells the church that it is their duty to be "subject to the *priests* and *deacons* as unto God and Christ." That is, to obey them that, by the consent of the whole church, have the rule over them and admonish them. He then tells the elders how they must conduct in the church. "Let the *elders* be compassionate and merciful towards all; turning them from their errors; * * * being zealous of what is good," etc. § 6.

He speaks of the defection of "Valens, who was once a presbyter [or elder] among" them; and exhorts the church in their discipline of him: "be ye also moderate upon this occasion; and look not upon such as enemies, but call them back as suffering and erring members, that ye may save your whole body: for by so doing, ye shall edify your own selves." § 11.

In this epistle there is nothing to lead us to suppose that the churches had undergone any material change in their order and discipline, since Clement wrote, between forty and fifty years before.

The churches are still spoken of as separate, indepen-

dent, congregational bodies—as composed of visible saints—as not subject to the authoritative direction or instruction of any one out of their own body; and to their own officers, only "as the ministers of God in Christ"—that these officers were priests, or elders, and deacons; who, in common with the other brethren, were subject to the discipline of the church.

Epistles of Ignatius, about A. D. 116.

We have now—if we may trust to these epistles—arrived at that period in the history of the primitive churches, referred to by Mosheim, when it was thought necessary to appoint one of the elders of each church to be a sort of president; a *princeps inter pares*, a presiding officer among equals in rank. The existence of a number of presbyters, or elders, or bishops, in each of the primitive churches, has already been alluded to, and the reason of the thing assigned.*

To prevent disorder in the churches, these elders in concurrence, probably, with the whole church, selected one of their number, to be a superintendent, or overseer, of all the affairs of the church; to distinguish him from the other elders he was called ἐπίσκοπος—the superintendent, overseer, bishop—and at length, seems to have held that title to the exclusion of his co-presbyters. To this arrangement of the churches, the next apostolic father to whom we shall refer, often alludes.

Ignatius wrote near A. D. 116. There has been much dispute about the writings of this Christian father; many

* See p. 50, 51.

having questioned whether any of his genuine epistles are extant. Dr. Campbell regards these epistles as interpolated and corrupted: "I say not that these epistles ought to be rejected in the lump, but, that undue freedoms have been used even with the purest of them, by some over zealous partizâns of the priesthood." Lect. 5. p. 99. He adds: "The style in many places is not suited to the simplicity of the times immediately succeeding the times of the apostles." "It abounds with inflated epithets." "But it is not the style only, which has raised suspicion, it is chiefly the sentiments." pp. 100, 101.

Prof. Norton rejects these epistles as manifest forgeries. "I doubt" says he, "whether any book, in its general tone of sentiment and language, ever betrayed itself as a forgery more clearly, than do these pretended epistles of Ignatius." Quoted by Prof. Pond, who says: "After an impartial view of the whole case, I accord with the sentiment of Prof. Norton, as expressed in his very learned work on the 'Genuineness of the Gospels.'" "The Church," p. 126.

I do not pretend to be a judge competent to decide this question. But as these epistles of Ignatius are greatly relied upon by Episcopalians to prove the early existence of three orders among Christian ministers, and he is the first Christian father who mentions them, I have thought his testimony upon other points could not well be objected to by the advocates of diocesan Episcopacy. While, therefore, we hold ourselves at liberty to rebut his testimony respecting the point for the establishment of which he is brought upon the stand by them, *they* are bound to receive his testimony respecting the general order of the churches, because he is their own witness.

The titles and salutations of these epistles.

Archbishop Wake regards seven epistles which he has translated, as unquestionably the genuine and authentic writings of Ignatius. These are addressed—"To the church which is at Ephesus in Asia"—"To the church which is at Magnesia, near the Meander"—"To the holy church which is at Trolles in Asia"—"To the church which also presides in the place of the region of the Romans"—"To the church of God, etc., which is at Philadelphia, in Asia"—"To the church which is at Smyrna, in Asia," and "to Polycarp, bishop of the church which is at Smyrna; their overseer, but rather himself, over-looked by God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

From these Epistles, occupying about forty pages, I can quote but sparingly.

The distinct, independent, complete, and congregational character of the churches in Ignatius' day is very fully recognized in these epistles.

The titles or salutations of the several epistles, go far to show this: in every instance in which a church is addressed, it is, "*the* church which *sojourneth*" in such a city. He exhorts the church at Ephesus, "to come more fully together." "For" says he, "when ye *meet fully together in one place*, the powers of the devil are destroyed," etc. § 13. To the Magnesian church, he says: "being *come together into the same place*, have one common prayer," etc. And again, "*Come ye all together as unto one temple of God, as to one altar*," etc. § 7.

He speaks of the Romans being "*gathered together* in love," (§ 2.) and the Philadelphians *coming* "*all together into the same place.*" § 6.

Now, these expressions all indicate that a *church* in Ignatius' day, consisted of no more than could assemble

Testimony of Ignatius continued.

together in one place, for prayer and the worship of God. This is what we understand by a *congregational* church, in distinction from a *national* or *provincial* church, or one embracing several congregations of believers.

The churches are represented as "*holy*"—as "*blessed through the greatness and fulness of God* the Father, and *predestinated before the world began*"—"*much beloved of God*"—"*of well ordered love and charity in God*"—persons of "*blameless and constant disposition* through patience"—as those who had "*obtained mercy* from the majesty of the most high God and his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, *beloved and illuminated.*"

All these expressions denote that the churches were composed only of visible saints—professed Christians.

There are frequent references in these epistles to the changes of which Mosheim speaks, in the second century, respecting the officers of the churches. I allude to the introduction of a *presiding elder* in each church; who, in consideration of his having the general oversight of the flock, is styled *bishop*, while his associates retain the title of elders, or presbyters.

Ignatius exhorts the Ephesians to be subject to their "Bishop and the Presbytery," § 3; again, he speaks of their "famous Presbytery" worthy of God, "being fitted as exactly to the Bishop, as the strings are to the harp." § 4. To the Magnesians he says: "I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a divine concord: your Bishop *presiding* in the place of God, your Presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles; and your deacons most dear to me, being intrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ." § 6. To the Trallions he says: "without your Bishop you should do nothing: also, be ye subject to your Pres-

Testimony of Ignatius continued.

byters, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ our hope. * * The deacons also, as being the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ must by all means please all." To the Smyrneans he writes: "See that ye all follow your Bishop as Jesus Christ, the Father: and the Presbytery, as the apostles. And reverence the Deacons, as the command of God," etc. § 8.

If these passages may be relied upon as genuine, they fully authorize the assertion of Mosheim that a change was introduced into the government of the church during the second century.

These quotations, however, by no means countenance the opinion that diocesan Episcopacy, having archbishops, and bishops, and priests, and deacons, all different orders in the ministry, and occupying different stations among the congregations of their Church, had any existence in the second century.

The kind of bishop, of which Ignatius speaks, was associated with the presbyters and deacons of a church in the management of one and the same church; and this, not a diocesan church, but *a congregational;* one that could "meet together in one place"—which could follow its bishop, or pastor, as sheep their shepherd.

There is not the slightest intimation that their bishops had the least authority beyond the limits of their own church.* And so far are these epistles from encouraging

* Dr. Campbell says: "The great patrons of the hierarchy, who found so much on the testimony of Ignatius, will not deny, that on this article [the independency of the churches, and the limited extent of the bishop's power] he is quite explicit."

"The bishop's charge is, in the primitive writers, *invariably denominated* ἐκκλησία, *a church, or congregation, in the singular num-*

the notion that the bishops were the representatives of the apostles, and constituted a distinct and superior order in the ministry, that Ignatius repeatedly speaks of the *presbyters*, or the *presbytery*, as the representatives of the apostles. This he says: "*your presbyters, in the place of the council of the apostles.*" "Be ye subject to your *presbyters, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ* our hope." Trallian, § 2. "Reverence * * the presbyters as *the Sanhedrim of God, and college of the apostles.*" Ep. Tral. § 3. And so, in various other passages.

The bishop is nowhere spoken of as having any inherent, independent or Divine authority to govern the presbyters. The bishop is spoken of as "*presiding*," and the presbyters as "*a council.*" The churches are exhorted to be subject to their "bishop *and* the presbytery." Eph. § 2. He commends Sotio, a deacon of the Magnesians, for being "subject unto his bishop, as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery, as to the law of Christ;" and the presbyters he commends for reverencing their bishops; but all this was only that kind of submission and reverence which resulted from prudential considerations; which was necessary to harmony in the operations of each church. The presbyters, are said to submit to their bishop "as becomes those who are *prudent in God*, submitting to him, or rather, not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bishop of us all."

And, for the same reasons he exhorts the brethren of the church to be subject *one to another*: "*Wherefore, taking the same holy course see that ye all reverence one another.*" Ep. Mag. passim.

ber, NEVER ἐκκλησίας, *churches, or congregations, in the plural.*" Lect. 6. p. 105.

Right of the churches to elect their own officers.

The God of the church is a God of order. To secure order in the churches there must be a degree of subordination among the members, to one another, and to those who are constituted their rulers and overseers. This, Congregationalists are as ready to admit, as any denomination.

The epistles distinctly recognize the authority of the churches to elect, and set apart to their service, such officers as they needed.

To the Philadelphians Ignatius writes: "Now as concerning the church at Antioch which is in Syria, seeing I am told that through your prayers, and the bowels which ye have towards it in Jesus Christ, it is in peace; *it will become you as the church of God* [πρέπον ἔστιν ὑμῖν ὡς ἐκκλησία Θεοῦ—it is proper for you as a church of God] to *ordain some deacon* [χειροτονῆσαι * ἐπίσκοπον, to choose or appoint by vote *a bishop*] to go to them thither, as the ambassador of God; that he may rejoice with them when they meet together [ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ in the same place]; * * other neighboring churches have sent them [i. e. to the church at Antioch] some bishops, some priests and deacons." § 10.

Now, for whatever purpose these bishops, priests and deacons were sent abroad by the churches, one thing is evident, namely—*the churches in the time of Ignatius, had the authority to elect their own officers.*

This right constitutes a distinctive peculiarity of the Congregational system of church government.

From the cursory survey of these several epistles which has now been taken, it appears that, although some chan-

* It is observable that this is the very word which is used in Acts 14: 23; "*Ordained* them elders in every church."

Testimony of Justin Martyr.

ges had been made in the government of the churches since Clement wrote, and especially, since the apostles began to organize churches—yet the churches of Christ remained in A. D. 108—17, substantially as they were organized by the apostles and their fellow-laborers; and retained most of the features of church order and discipline which are now denominated Congregational.

If from these most ancient fathers of the church, we come down to writers of a later period, we shall find that the churches still retained many of their Congregational peculiarities.

Justin Martyr, who wrote an apology for the Christians about the year of our Lord 150, testifies, that professed piety was a pre-requisite to church membership in his day. "As many," says he, "as are *persuaded* and *do believe* the things to be true which are taught and spoken by us, and *take upon themselves* [i. e. publicly profess] that they are able to live according to that doctrine, they are taught to seek of God by fasting and prayer, the pardon of their foregoing sins; and we also, *do join together with them* in fasting and prayer for that end."* After the baptism of the convert, he says: "Him who is thus baptized, who *believeth* and is *received among us*, we bring him unto those called the brethren, when they are met (or gathered together,)" etc.

"In this church," says Dr. Owen, "he mentions only two sorts of officers προεστῶτες and διάκονοι, 'presidents and deacons.' Of the first sort, in the duty of one of their assemblies he mentions but one; ὁ προεστὼς, 'the presi-

* I quote from the learned work of Dr. Owen, for some time Vice Chancellor to the University of Oxford, on the "State of the first churches after the Apostles." Works, Vol. XX. p. 151.

dent,' the ruler, the bishop, to whom belonged the administration of all the holy mysteries. And that we may not think he is called the προεστως, 'president,' with respect unto any pre-eminence over other ministers or elders, like a diocesan bishop, he terms him προεστὼς τῶν ἀδελφῶν, he that 'presided over the brethren' of that church. Now certainly that church wherein one president, elder, presbyter, or bishop, did administer the holy ordinances in one place, unto all the members of it, was a particular congregation.

"The things that he ascribeth unto this leader, to be done at this general meeting of the church every Lord's day, were (1) That he prayed; (2) That after the reading of the Scripture he preached; (3) That he consecrated the Eucharist; the elements of the bread and wine being distributed by the deacons, unto the congregation; (4) That he closed the whole worship of the day in prayer." pp. 153—4. That is, he did precisely what every Congregational pastor does now in conducting the religious services of the sanctuary.

Tertullian, in his Apology for the Christians written about the year 200, says: "The elders came unto their honor or office by *the testimony of the people.*"

Cyprian, in one of his epistles written about A. D. 250, says: "For this cause the people obedient to the commands of our Lord, and fearing God, ought to separate themselves from a wicked bishop, nor mix themselves with the worship of a sacrilegious priest. For they principally have the power of *choosing the worthy priests*, and *rejecting the unworthy, which comes from divine authority or appointment.*" pp 426—428. A power, and privilege still claimed by Congregational churches.

Dr. Owen's assertion.

Not to enlarge by quotations from other ancient writers, in illustration of any of the several points now under consideration, I will finish by transcribing the allegation of the learned, and industrious, and pious, John Owen; who, after a labored investigation of this whole matter, lays down and successfully proves this proposition: "*That in no approved writers for the space of two hundred years after Christ, there is any mention made of any other organical, visibly professing church, but that only which is parochial, or congregational.*" By which he means; that all the churches during the first two centuries, were distinct, independent bodies; not so numerous as to prevent them from assembling together for public worship, and the transaction of church business; and that, for all the purposes of church organization, they were invested with sufficient and complete authority.

"A church of any other form, state or order, papal or oecumenical [i. e. general], patriarchal [such as the Greek church], metropolitical, diocesan, or classical, [Presbyterian], they [the writers of the first two centuries] know not, neither name nor thing, nor any of them appear in any of their writings." Vol. XX. p. 132.

Every one who is acquainted with the character of John Owen, knows he did not deal in rash assertions. Every one who has examined his works on church order and discipline, must be aware that in these neither sound argument nor extensive learning are wanting.

His conclusions are those of an eminently pious and learned man, who, after a careful examination of the arguments of Congregationalists, *for the purpose of refuting them*,* became himself a decided friend to their views of

* The book of which Owen undertook "the examination and

church order; and, for nearly forty years, a leader among the English Congregationalists. The work from which I have extracted was written near the close of life; and contains, with his maturest thoughts, his dying testimony to the principles of church government which he advocated; and well deserves the careful study of every one who would fully understand the foundation on which rest our Congregational principles and doctrines.*

But, to show that Dr. Owen is not alone in his opinion, I will quote a few sentences from the learned Presbyterian, Dr. Campbell. Speaking of the character, etc. of churches during the first and second centuries, he says: * * "Every church had its own pastors, and its own presbytery, [i. e. council of church officers, including the deacons], *independently of every other church.* And when one of the Presbyters came to be considered as the *pastor*, by way of eminence, while the rest were regarded as his assistants, vicars, or curates, who acted under his direction; as then every church or congregation had but one who was called bishop, *so every bishop had but one congregation or church.*

"This is a remark," continues he, "which deserves your particular notice, as it regards an essential point in the

confutation," was John Cotton's work "On the Keys." See Owen's Memoirs, pp. 55, 56.

* In these remarks, I would not be understood to express an unqualified approval and adoption of all his views of church order and discipline. There are some points on which modern, and especially New England Congregationalists, would slightly differ from Owen; but his writings as a whole, are almost incomparably excellent, sound and learned upon this subject. And yet, they are very little known in N. E. Even the valuable memoir of the life and times of Dr. Owen, has never, to my knowledge, been republished in this country.

constitution of the primitive church, a point which is generally admitted by those who can make any pretensions to the knowledge of Christian antiquities." Lect. 6. p. 104. This topic is ably, and fully, and satisfactorily considered, in his 7th Lecture.

Thus, I conceive, it has been shown from the testimony of learned and impartial ecclesiastical historians—none of whom, save Dr. Owen, were Congregationalists, and who consequently were without any inducement to misunderstand or misinterpret facts—that the leading principles and doctrines of the Congregational system, were developed in the order and discipline of the apostolic churches; that this organization, for substance, was retained during the first two centuries of the Christian church; and that corruption and error followed the abandonment of the apostolic models. The correctness of their opinions is not made to rest on the bare assertions of these historians—however learned and impartial they are acknowledged to be—but numerous extracts from the apostolic and Christian fathers have been introduced, taken, as it is believed, from unexceptionable sources, to prove the correctness of the statements made, and of the opinions advanced.

And now, though the strength of our cause lies not in the testimony of the fathers, or the opinion of learned men—the Scriptures being our only infallible guide—must it not be conceded by all parties, that the correctness of our interpretation of the Scriptures, or, in other words, the scriptural character of our system—receives strong confirmation from the testimony of the earliest inspired writers of the christian church.*

* The reader will find a very complete view of these testimonies in our favor, collected by Rev. Dr. Chauncy, Pastor of the first church in Boston. Printed 1771, 8vo. pp. 474.

PART IV.

ECCLESIASTICAL PRACTICE OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

The principles and doctrines embraced by Congregationalists have led to the adoption of certain ecclesiastical practices, which have become a sort of common law to the denomination in this country; at least, in New England. A knowledge of these, is necessary to a perfect understanding of Congregationalism.

There may be slight deviations among us from the practices which will now be specified; but it is believed that in all the essential points, good usage has established the following rules.

I. The practice of Congregationalists in organizing Churches.

If in any place a sufficient number* of persons wish to be organized into a Congregational church, an orderly procedure would be, substantially, as follows:

* The number is not fixed: it may be more or less according to circumstances. Under ordinary circumstances, it should not be less than *seven;* because a less number cannot conveniently perform the duties enjoined by Christ, in the xviii. of Matt. in relation to discipline. When however, there is a reasonable prospect of a speedy addition to their number, if *two* or *three* should covenant together in the name of Christ, they may expect his presence and blessing. Tertullian says: "*Three persons, though laymen, make a church.*" Campbell, Lect. 4th, p. 64.

They would meet together and appoint a committee to advise with one or more of the neighboring Congregational pastors and churches; and if they approved of organizing a new church, to draw up a Confession of Faith and Covenant, with articles of government and practice; and, to make other necessary preparatory arrangements. These arrangements being made, the same committee, in the name of their brethren, would prepare "Letters Missive,"* as they are called—that is, letters of invitation—to so many of the neighboring churches as should be agreed upon; soliciting their attendance by pastor and delegate, at an appointed time, to take into consideration the question—Whether the interests of Zion require the organization of a Congregational church in that place?

2. At the time and place specified for the meeting of the council, the several persons proposing to unite in church fellowship, would be present, with the record of their previous proceedings, and a copy of their covenant and articles; and prepared to give any information to the council, which would be necessary to a perfect understanding of the merits of the question before them.

The pastors and delegates of the churches being assembled, one of the number reads the "Letter Missive" by which they are called together; the council then organize, by choosing a moderator and scribe; and proceed, after prayer for Divine direction, to examine the papers laid before them by the committee of the brethren, at whose request they have assembled; and to hear statements from them, respecting the peculiarities of their situation, etc. which render the organization of a Congregational church desirable. If satisfied with their reasons, and with the

* See form of this letter, Appendix No. 1.

covenant and articles agreed upon by the brethren, the council vote—to proceed to the organization of a Congregational church: and then, fix upon the time and place for the public exercises. The parts are then assigned, as: Invocation and reading of suitable passages of Scripture. Introductory prayer. Sermon. Reading of the Covenant; recognition of the church, and consecrating prayer; usually assigned to the moderator. The fellowship of the churches. The concluding prayer; followed with the Benediction.

At the appointed time their services are publicly attended; and the associated brethren are recognized as a Congregational church; empowered to transact all appropriate church business, independently of the authoritative control of any person or persons whatever.*

II. The Choice and Consecration of Church Officers.

The church thus organized, as soon as convenient† meet together; and after appointing a moderator and clerk, proceed to choose their officers; viz. a pastor, if previous arrangements admit of it; and two, or more deacons, according to the size and circumstances of the church.

* Mather gives a detailed and particular account of all the proceedings, in organizing a church, in his Ratio Disciplinae, Art. 1.

† When it can be done, it is desirable that this meeting should take place in season to have the same council which organizes the church, assist in the consecration of church officers. And, when this is intended, it should be mentioned in the letters missive; and the necessary preliminary arrangements should be made.

Choice of a Pastor.

The orderly course in choosing a pastor is substantially this:—The church, having enjoyed a sufficient opportunity of hearing a minister preach, and of becoming acquainted with his religious character, and his personal habits, etc;* vote to give him a call to become their pastor.† It is *usual*—though not strictly necessary upon Congregational principles—to invite the religious society, which statedly worships with the church, to concur in this call; and to fix upon the salary which shall be offered the candidate.

These preliminary steps being taken, the call of the church, and the concurrence of the society, are forwarded to the pastor elect; signed by the moderators and clerks of the respective bodies. The call being accepted by the candidate; a committee of the church, after consultation with the pastor elect, agree upon the churches which shall compose the ordaining council. "Letters Missive" are then prepared,‡ and signed by the committee, and sent to the several churches previously agreed upon.§

* There is reason to fear that our churches are not all as particular upon this point as they ought to be; certainly far less so than our fathers were. It was once thought necessary for a candidate for settlement, to spend *months* among the people of his prospective charge; but now, some churches are satisfied with an acquaintance of a few days only; and some, are ready to call a pastor without having had *any personal* acquaintance with him. This, undoubtedly, is one reason why there is now so little permanency in the pastoral relation. Are we not verifying the maxim—"To *innovate* is not to *improve?*"

† See a form, Appendix No. 2.

‡ For the usual form, See Appendix No. 3.

§ It is common to intimate in these letters the wishes of the com-

Ordaining Council.

At the appointed time and place, the pastors and delegates assemble; and after reading the "Letters Missive," organize, by the choice of moderator and scribe; and after prayer, proceed to business.

A record of the doings of the church and society is called for; then, the call of the church, and the concurrence of the society, and the provision made for the support of a pastor, and the acceptance of the same by the candidate. These being satisfactory, the council vote—To proceed to the examination of the candidate for ordination.

A certificate of his church membership is called for; or evidence that he has become a member of the church over which it is proposed to ordain him;* then his license to preach the gospel. These papers being satisfactory to the council, they proceed to examine the candidate respecting his religious experience, his motives for entering the ministry, and his theological views. This examination is usually conducted by the moderator of the council, each member being allowed the privilege of proposing any additional questions.†

mittee, respecting the particular part in the ordination services, which each pastor should perform; and the ordaining council usually regard the wishes thus expressed, in the assignment of the several parts. But strict propriety, perhaps requires, that this whole matter should be left to the council.

* This, as it seems to me, is most agreeable to Congregational principles and early usage. Every pastor should be a member of his own church; and, unless a candidate will consent to this connection, I should hesitate to ordain him. The reader will find this matter discussed in the Appendix, No. 7.

† The lay delegates have the same privilege that the pastors have; and should never hesitate to use it. This examination should always be public.

The council being satisfied upon these several points, vote—To proceed to assign the parts in the ordination services. These are, generally, Invocation and reading of the Scriptures, Introductory prayer, Sermon, Ordaining prayer, accompanied with the imposition of hands, Charge to the pastor, The fellowship of the churches, Address to the people,* Concluding prayer, and benediction.†

Installation.

In case the pastor elect has been previously ordained over a church, the proceedings of the council vary from those described, in two particulars. First, in requiring a certified copy of the proceedings of the council which dismissed the candidate from his previous charge, and their recommendation of him, as a worthy minister of the Lord Jesus, to avoid the danger of imposition; and, secondly,

* This is rather a modern innovation; whether an *improvement* or not, I pretend not to decide. But one thing is certain—that the address to the people, is generally little else than a twice told tale: the appropriate topics of it, being regarded as common property, by all the other speakers. And the people themselves are generally weary enough to wish to be left to their own reflections. If every man would keep within the bounds of his own appointment, both as to matter and time, an address, or charge to the people, might be an appropriate and profitable part of every ordination service.

† The churches of our denomination in Great Britain invite neighboring ministers to assist in ordaining their pastors, but do not call ecclesiastical councils for this purpose. "The right hand of fellowship" does not enter into their ordination or installation services. In England, laying on of hands does not *always* form a part of the ordination services. (MSS. letters from Rev. Mr. Robertson and Rev. Mr. Buckham; the former a Scotch Congregationalist, the latter an English.)

in not imposing hands upon the pastor at the time of the installing prayer. In all other respects, the proceedings of the council are the same in ordination and installation.*

The choice and consecration of Deacons.

Deacons are chosen by a vote of the church. They should be men of respected wisdom and integrity, of good, practical common sense, well rooted and grounded in the faith, and eminent for piety; and, whenever it is possible, men of mature years, and considerable religious experience.

It is judged proper that the choice should not be made until opportunities have been enjoyed by the brethren, to consult together freely, and perhaps repeatedly, and to become united in opinion respecting the most suitable persons for the office.

When the choice has been made, it is considered proper to give the deacons elect some time to consider the question of acceptance. This being signified, it is consistent with the established usage of our denomination, to set them apart to their work, by prayer and imposition of the hands of the pastor and the other ordained deacons of the church; or the assistance of a neighboring pastor and deacons may be obtained; or, a committee of the church may act in behalf of the whole body.†

* The fathers of New England seem to have imposed hands at every successive settlement of a pastor.

† Upon Congregational principles, the right and power to ordain church officers—whether deacons or elders—is undoubtedly in *the churches*. And, when ordination is performed by ministers, they

III. The Church assembled for Business.

Every well regulated Congregational church, has frequent meetings for the transaction of church business. In

act not by any inherent right or power, in themselves as ministers, but as the *representatives* of their respective churches.

There is a propriety in calling upon neighboring churches to assist in the ordination of *ministers*, which does not exist in the case of *deacons*.

A minister may be called to officiate to other churches, in the administration of the gospel, and the ordinances of the church baptism and the Lord's supper.

But, the work of a deacon is confined to the particular church which chooses and ordains him, and the fellowship of other churches is not, therefore, needed.

In several cases, the fathers of the New England churches, ordained their *pastors*, even without the aid of other ministers. Hutchinson mentions one instance in which this was done when two clergymen were present, witnessing the ceremony. Vol. 1. p. 425. Trumbull, in his History of Connecticut mentions several cases. See also Winthrop, Vol. II. p. 18.

This is according to the Platform: Chap. 9. Sect. 4. The synod of 1680, questioned the propriety of lay-ordination. See Magnalia, Vol. II. pp. 218, 219. Few Congregationalists would now approve of lay-ordination, and I am not sure but that some would consider it invalid. Yet, upon Congregational principles the church is the depositary of all ecclesiastical authority, under Jesus Christ: and if so, then must it have the right and authority to ordain its own pastor, with its own hands. I do not, by any means, advocate lay-ordination, I think that it is manifestly proper, for reasons already assigned, that the pastors of neighboring churches should be employed as agents in this work: but still, I must regard it as perfectly within the prerogatives of any duly organized church to ordain its pastor without the aid of neighboring ministers. No body of believers can be considered an entire, complete church, which

our cities these meetings are more frequent than in the country. Many city churches meet every week; and business may be transacted at every meeting, if necessary, though the special object of the meetings be religious improvement.

In every Congregational church the pastor is moderator of the meeting; he puts all motions; and gives advice and instruction respecting the proper method of adjusting all matters under consideration.

In many of our churches the pastors keep the records of the church, and make all the entries of votes, etc. It is better to have a church clerk, appointed for this purpose; who shall make the needful records under the pastor's direction.

If, at any time the church should be destitute of a pastor, or, if the pastor should be unavoidably absent from a

has not the power and right, if need be, to do all that is essential to its personal well being and usefulness: but if a church must depend on ordained clergymen to institute its pastor, it surely is not that complete body which our principles suppose it to be.

The chief objection to lay-ordination seems to rest on an indefinite impression, that a secret, indescribable, certain something is communicated by the laying on of hands in ordination; and therefore, that none but those who have received this secret communication can impart it to others.

But, since the belief of any such gift in connection with the laying on of hands, is unhesitatingly rejected by us, and ordination is regarded simply as a public recognition of a previously formed connection—formed by the choice of the church and the acceptance of the candidate—why should we hesitate to admit the validity of lay-ordination, if performed by a church of Christ?

The celebrated Robert Hall (Eng.) never received any other than lay-ordination.

Same subject.

church meeting, the senior deacon becomes, by virtue of his office, moderator of the church.

At all church meetings, every brother has entire liberty to express his views and feelings, upon every subject which may be brought before the church; and all questions are decided by the votes of the brethren; the majority, in all cases, governing.

It is not common, however, to settle questions of great importance, by the vote of a bare majority. A greater degree of unanimity is generally sought, and usually obtained.* Very few ministers would feel justified in accepting the call of a mere majority of a church, unless the circumstances of the case were very peculiar.

It is generally thought desirable that the female members of a church should be present at the transaction of all ordinary business, for their satisfaction and instruction; but, it is utterly inconsistent with established usage for females to take any part in business transactions. Their views and wishes are to be expressed privately to their pastor or their brethren. We suffer not a woman to speak in the church, agreeably to apostolic injunctions.†

* The churches of our denomination in Great Britain seem to consider *entire* unanimity indispensable. "If there be but *one* member of a different mind from the rest, it is the same as if there were the *one half*." "Rev. A. Carson's reasons for separating from the synod of Ulster," (Ireland) p. 12.

† I shall not be understood to say, that no Congregational church pursues a different course. I have had occasion to know of one, at least, which has followed a different practice to its cost. All deviations from the course described in the text, are spots upon the fair and Scriptural practice of our churches.

IV. Admission of Members.

Congregational principles require that every candidate for church membership should give some account of the hope that he entertains, either to the church as a body, or to a committee appointed for this purpose.* In some in-

* It seems to me more consistent with our principles, and with early and good usage, that this account should be given before the whole church. I am aware that it is considered a fiery ordeal for a timid person; but it should not be so regarded. Every church is a Christian family, having similar views and feelings; a common object; and like hopes and fears. The candidate for admission professes to be one with the church in all these particulars. In communicating his views and feelings to the church, he speaks to the family of which he is to become a member; to persons who can sympathize with him in all his views and feelings; and who are prepared to receive him with open arms to their fellowship, so soon as they are assured of his worthiness.

After more than ten years'experience of the practice recommended, in the admission of some two hundred members—I am disposed to believe, that the difficulties in the way of this practice, are rather imaginary than real. The examination is, certainly, deeply interesting, and often highly useful to the church; it gives them a knowledge of God's dealings with his children; and furnishes encouragement to labor and pray for the conversion of sinners. Furthermore, the self-denying decision which it requires, to submit to a public examination—by public, I mean before the whole church—is often of essential advantage to the candidate himself. It no doubt prevents, too, some proud and hypocritical persons from entering the church. Few such persons would care to present themselves to the scrutiny of a whole church, though they might venture upon a more private examination.

Besides, it seems to me, to throw too much responsibility upon the pastor and a few lay members of the church, to make them judges of the fitness of every candidate for church membership.

The church are called upon to vote in the admission of a mem-

stances the relation of his religious experience is given verbally ; in others, in writing. In both cases, the candidate is expected to answer any questions which the pastor or brethren may propose ; and to remove, by explanation, etc., any difficulties which may exist in the mind of any member of the church. After the church have satisfied themselves of the sincerity, religious knowledge, and piety of the candidate, they vote to have him "propounded for admission."

A week or more previous to the approaching communion season, his name is publicly announced, as a candidate for church membership; and any person knowing aught against the individual named, or any good reason why he should not be received to church fellowship, is desired to make known the same to the pastor, or to any member of the church. Whether this wish be expressed in words or not, such is the meaning and intention of the act of "propounding" a candidate.

If after this, no objection appears to the admission of the person thus "propounded ;" on the next sacramental occasion—which, in most churches occurs as often as once in two months, in many monthly, though in some country churches much less frequently—the candidate publicly assents to the covenant, articles of faith, government, and

ber; is it not proper, then, that they should have an opportunity to form their judgment by personal examination of the candidate? Should they trust wholly to the judgment of others?

The admission of a member is now the act of the whole *church;* and not of a *committee* of the church. But, if our churches are induced to yield their right to *examine* candidates for their fellowship to a committee, is there no reason to fear that they may, ere long be called upon to yield to a committee, their right to *admit* members? and would not this be to renounce Congregationalism ?

practice, adopted by the church, solemnly promising to walk with them in all the ordinances of the gospel, and in the discharge of all the duties of a religious life; and is then received into the church, and entitled to all its ordinances and privileges.*

Thus strict, and watchful, and cautious, are Congregational churches in the admission of members.

V. Dismission of Members.

If, for any good reason, a church member should wish to remove his relation from one church to another, he applies to the church for a letter of dismission, and of recommendation to a particular church, which he specifies.† If

* The Congregational churches in Scotland, with few exceptions, practice "weekly communion," at the Lord's supper.

In the admission of members, the work of examination is intrusted to the pastor and "two visitors," who are appointed by the church. After satisfying themselves of the piety, and other qualifications of the candidate for church fellowship, they report accordingly to the church; and the candidate "is admitted, after exhortation to duties, etc., and prayer."

I quote from a manuscript letter of Rev. Mr. Robertson, for thirty years pastor of a Congregational church in Scotland. I am greatly indebted to this gentleman, and to Rev. Mr. Buckham, already referred to, for valuable information, respecting Congregationalism in Great Britain.

† It is contrary to all regular Congregational practice, to dismiss a member, and recommend him "to any church with which he may please to unite." The church must be *specified*, and be known to be in fellowship with the dismissing church.

If a member is about to leave the neighborhood of the church to which he belongs, and does not know with what church he shall wish to connect himself, he may take from the pastor, or the clerk of the church, a certificate of his regular standing, and a letter of

the two churches are in fellowship—that is, if they recognize each other as churches of Christ—the church vote to dismiss their brother, and recommend him to the church specified.

Until this letter is presented, and the individual is received by the church to which the letter is addressed, he remains a member of the church from which the letter is taken, and is subject to the watch and discipline of the same. The letter being always worded in such a way as distinctly to recognize this doctrine.*

Any disregard of this authorized practice of our churches is considered an irregularity, alike injurious to the churches and to the individuals concerned.

It may be proper to remark in this connection, that we suppose Christ has given his churches no authority to *dismiss* any of their members *to the world.* Church members have been known to apply to their pastor for "a dismission from the church," assigning as a reason perhaps, their personal unfitness for church fellowship; or, their dissatisfaction with the sentiments or doings of the church.

Now, every person about to unite with a Congregational

general introduction [see Appendix, No. 4]; which will secure for him, the privilege of occasional communion with any church which acknowledges *that* from which he goes, as a church of Christ.

This, however, will not supersede the necessity of a letter of dismission or recommendation to some particular church. Until this is granted, the person remains a member of the church with which he originally connected himself; and is amenable to the discipline of that church.

It is a gross irregularity, for one Congregational church to receive to stated and permanent fellowship, a member of a sister church, without a letter of dismission and recommendation.

* See Appendix, No. 5.

church ought distinctly to understand, that there are only two ways by which a member may become permanently separated from one of our churches; one is, by dismission and recommendation to a sister church; the other is, by excommunication. There are no private ways to get in or out of our churches.

VI. Dismission of a Pastor.

If, for any sufficient reason, it is deemed expedient to dissolve the connection between a pastor and his church, the regular course is as follows: The pastor lays before the church a communication, stating his wishes, and the reasons for them; and requests the church to unite with him in calling a council, to advise in the premises. If the church are unwilling to have the pastoral connection dissolved, they vote to that effect; and appoint a committee, to confer with their pastor; and to dissuade him, if possible, from his purpose.

If, however, the church should consider it expedient to comply with the pastor's request, they so vote; and appoint a committee to assist in the selection and call of a mutual council.

When the council assemble, all the proceedings of the church and the pastor are laid before them; and they examine the reasons assigned by the pastor for wishing a dismission from his church; and the grounds of concurrence on the part of the church. If in view of the circumstances, it is judged proper that the pastor's request should be granted, the council so vote; and advise the church to dismiss him. If the council should deem the reasons in favor of a dismission *insufficient*, they advise the church and pas-

tor accordingly. It is then left with the church to accept, or reject the advice of the council as they may judge proper. Upon Congregational principles, the church has the *power* to receive or refuse; but, it would be considered, generally, an impropriety—not to say an indecorum—to reject and disregard the unanimous advice of a mutual council, without the very best of reasons.

It would be considered by a council as an irregularity and impropriety of no less magnitude, for a church to *dismiss* their pastor; and then call a council to *sanction* their doings.

A church may vote upon a pastor's request for dismission; that they will grant it, *provided, a mutual council shall advise thereto;* and thus, supersede the necessity of any further action of theirs, after the decision of the council. This, perhaps, is the more common practice of our churches.*

If a church should think the removal of their pastor desirable, a regular procedure would be, for the deacons, or some of the older members of the church, to converse freely and frankly with him, stating their convictions, and request him to ask a dismission from the church. If the pastor should decline so to do; they would then, desire him to call a meeting of the church, for the purpose of conferring together, and acting, should it be judged expedient, in reference to the matter. The pastor would, of course, absent himself from such a meeting, unless he had some

* Congregational churches, have, I conceive, the *power* to *dismiss* their pastors, as they have to *ordain* them, without advice of council: but, if they *ordain* by the advice and the assistance of neighboring churches, consistency requires, that they should *dismiss*, by the same advice and assistance.

special communication to make to the church; or, retire from the meeting, after having opened it in the usual form, and called the senior deacon to the moderator's chair. The church being thus left by themselves, would proceed to discuss the subject before them: if agreed in opinion, they would appoint a committee, to lay before the pastor their reasons for wishing a dissolution of the pastoral connection; and request him to unite with them in calling a council to consider the matter, and advise in the premises. The way would thus be prepared for an orderly adjustment of the business, upon Christian, and Congregational principles.*

VII. Church Discipline.

It is a settled conviction of Congregationalists, that purity of faith and practice cannot be secured to the

* I regret to say, that our churches are not always so observant of the course pointed out in the text, as they should be. It is not unfrequently true, that a less judicious, consistent, and Christian practice is adopted. Neither Congregationalism nor any other *ism*, but *barbarism*—countenances the practice of starving, or driving a minister from his pastoral charge.

The practice of the English and Scotch Congregationalists—I call them by this name, though in respect to all such matters as we are now considering, they are *Independents*—differs somewhat from that described in the text. Councils are unknown to them—either in the settlement or dismission of their pastors. A pastor wishing to leave his field of labor, resigns his office; the church accepts his resignation, and thus the business begins and ends. It is, however, a thing of very rare occurrence for a Congregational pastor in those countries, to leave his church unless called to another sphere of usefulness. "For a minister to be 'unsettled' for any considerable time, would be injurious to his ministerial reputation." MS. Letters.

churches, except by the maintenance of strict and faithful Christian discipline. The members of our churches are therefore pledged to watch over, to admonish, to reprove, and to discipline each other, as necessity may require. A church that neglects this care of its members, is liable to be dealt with by its sister churches, as a "disorderly walker." We regard the 18th chapter of Matthew 15—18 verses, as a general directory in the exercise of church discipline: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And, if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

Agreeably to these Divine directions, the regular course of procedure, in case that a church member is believed to be guilty of unchristian conduct or heretical sentiments, is substantially this: The brother whose suspicions are awakened, goes first, alone and *privately*, to the suspected brother, and tells him of his fears. Care is taken to have the interview entirely private. If the trespasser acknowledges his fault, and makes Christian satisfaction,* here the matter may end, nothing more need be said or done.

* What shall constitute Christian satisfaction, must depend upon circumstances. If the offence is strictly private—known only to the complaining brother, and a very few others—acknowledgement of it, and a promise of reformation, would be deemed satis-

But, if the offender refuses to give such satisfaction, the complainant selects one or two judicious and intelligent brethren, to join him in conversing with the offender, and endeavoring to convince him of his error: if these efforts prove unavailing, a regular complaint is laid before the church in writing; specifying the particular charges against the offending brother, and stating the attempts which have been made to adjust the difficulty by private means.

It is considered entirely out of order for a church to receive such a complaint against one of its members, until they know that "the private steps"—as these preceding measures are called—have been taken.*

The church being satisfied that this has been done, vote to receive and examine the charges. Evidence of the truth of these is then called for. If witnesses are introduced who are not professors of religion, they may be requi-

factory. If the cause of complaint be extensively known; the confession should be more public.

This may be regarded as a general rule—confession and satisfaction should be as public as the offence.

* Many churches make an exception to this rule, in cases of *open* and *notorious* scandal, etc.; and receive a complaint *before* private means have been tried to reclaim the offender, and the Platform admits of this summary mode of proceeding in offences "of a more heinous, and criminal nature, to wit, such as are condemned by the light of nature." Chap. 14. § 3. The course pointed out in the text seems to me, however, preferable in *all* cases; for one prominent reason, if for no more, viz. That it is better adapted to secure one great end of all church discipline—*the reformation of the offender*. Almost any one will be more likely to be convinced of error, and brought to repentance, by the kind and faithful efforts of a friend in private, than by a public arraignment, in the first instance, before the whole church.

red to make oath to their statements.* If, in view of testimony, the church are convinced of the guilt of the accused, they, by their pastor or a committee—not excluding others—labor to convince the offender of his sin, and to induce him to make Christian satisfaction for his offence. These efforts being successful he is restored to good standing. But, if unsuccessful, the church, after suitable delay, proceed to admonish him, or to suspend him from their communion;† or, to excommunicate, and cut him off from all relation to, or connection with the church—to cast him out, as "a heathen man and a publican."

If at any future time, the excommunicated person should give evidence of repentance, he may be restored to the fellowship of the church, by making a public confession; and giving the church satisfactory evidence of a thorough reformation.

If the question be asked: What do Congregational churches regard as disciplinary offences? It may be answered, in general terms—Those only, which, if *persisted in*, will, in their opinion, exclude a person from heaven.

* The oath should be administered by a magistrate. This has not always been regarded as it should be.

† There is much reason to doubt the propriety of these measures, when employed as *punishments*. They may be proper, as steps preparatory to excommunication; in order to furnish the offender longer space for reflection and repentance; but never, I conceive, as punishments, which being induced, offset—so to speak—the offence; and entitle the sufferer to a restoration to church privileges, and to favor with his brethren. Christ's direction: "If he neglect to hear *the church*, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"—requires the excommunication of every obstinate offender; and forbids a church to deal with a member for anything which, if persisted in, will not justify excommunication.

What are disciplinary offences.

A fundamental principle in the organization of our churches is, that "none but good people" should be members of them. Reputed piety, is an indispensable qualification for church membership. Whatever practice, or doctrinal views, therefore, destroy the evidence of one's piety, unfit, of course, that person for church fellowship. Hence, no one should be made the subject of church discipline who is not pursuing a course of conduct, or cherishing doctrinal errors, which, if persisted in, must necessarily destroy his evidence of piety, and consequently his hope of heaven.

I am now speaking of what may strictly be called *church discipline*—including the preparatory steps, and the final action of the church. The above remarks are not designed to bring into question the lawfulness or propriety of church members speaking often one to another of any *improprieties* or *indiscretions* which may be noticed in each other. If there was more of Christian watchfulness among brethren, and frankness in speaking to each other about these matters, there would be much less need of church discipline.

VIII. Discipline of Pastors.

Sound Congregational principles and doctrines subject every pastor to the watch and discipline of his church. If he become heretical in doctrine, or corrupt in practice, he should be dealt with as any other member is; "only," says Samuel Mather, "with such special terms of respect, and repetition of address, as the relation of a father may call for."*

* The reader will find this matter discussed, at some length, in the Appendix, No. 7.

It is usual, however, for our churches to call for the advice of a council, before they proceed to excommunicate a pastor. All the preparatory steps may be taken, as in the case of a private member; the charges should be proved before the church, and the church should vote—That they are satisfied of the criminality of their pastor; but, in view of the peculiar importance and solemnity of the business, will take the advice of neighboring churches before proceeding further.

The pastor is then invited to unite with the church in calling a mutual council. This council examines all the doings of the church, and hears all the evidence in the case; if satisfied of the correctness of the measures pursued, and of the guilt of the pastor, they vote accordingly. They then proceed to depose the unworthy man from the ministry, and advise the church to excommunicate him. The church follow the advice of council, and thus terminates the melancholy business.

It is no doubt true, as the Platform maintains (chap. 10. § 6.) that the "church have *power* according to order,"—that is, according to the general principles on which a Congregational church is organized—to remove a pastor from office, without the advice and direction of a council; though it distinctly speaks of the propriety of "the council of other churches, where it may be had, directing thereto."

The reason why "the council of other churches" should direct thereto, is not, however, because a church has not sufficient power to perform this act of necessary discipline, as well as every other; but because, having invited "the council of other churches" to advise and assist in putting their pastor *into* office, consistency and decorum require

Reasons why.

that the same sort of advice and assistance should be sought in removing him *from* office. And furthermore, because other churches have a special interest and concern in the removal from office, of one who has sustained a sort of official relationship to them all. (See note, p.123.)

Another reason for the course pointed out is, that as the business of licensing to preach the gospel, and thus introducing into the ministerial office, is committed to the hands of the ministry, it is evidently proper that the same hands should be concerned in taking away a license to preach, and deposing from the ministry. If it should be said, that the same bodies are not, after all, employed in deposing, as in introducing into the ministry, the latter being an *association of clergymen*, and the former, a *council of churches;* the answer is obvious: every *association* acts in the name of the whole ministry, and on behalf of all the churches; so that a council, composed of ministers and lay delegates, represents both the ministry and the churches.

Now if the council did not first act decisively in the business, by deposing the unworthy man from the ministry, it might happen, that a minister would be an excommunicated member of a Christian church, while still an authorized preacher of the gospel. But on the other hand, if a council should be called previous to *any action* of the church, in relation to charges preferred against their pastor, it might happen that, on examination, there would not appear any sufficient grounds of complaint against the pastor. For these reasons regular practice requires the adoption of the course prescribed.

IX. Who shall complain of Offenders?

If an offence be *private*, or known only to a few individuals, it has already been remarked, that Congregational usage requires that one of these persons should go privately to his trespassing brother. It is a great irregularity to communicate the affair to any one previously unacquainted with the circumstances, unless it be a case of such difficulty as requires advice. This course we conceive to be required by Christ's directions, Matt. 5: 23, 24. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." By parity of reasoning—if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that *thou* hast aught *against thy brother*, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, etc.

But, supppose the offence be one of public notoriety; who then shall take the first step? Generally, one of the deacons of the church, or some one of the more aged and experienced brethren. There may be prudential reasons for preferring one brother to another in a given case, as the person to take the "first step," with an offender. These reasons should be allowed their full weight. But, if the *most* suitable person will not commence this important work, this will not excuse another from undertaking it. Yea, the *least* suitable person in the church. All are equally bound to discharge this duty; and if one, or *ten*, neglect it, this will not cancel the obligation of the others.

It must be attended to, or the whole church are made partakers of the sin of the offender.

Haste to be avoided—Churches accountable to each other.

It is deemed important that some time should elapse between the several steps of discipline; that the offender may have opportunity for reflection, before the ultimate appeal is made to the church. It may be proper to repeat every step; perhaps, even several times, before the complaint is lodged with the church. Every case that can be adjusted without an appeal to the church, should be, and most cases may be, if judicious and persevering and Christian efforts are made for this purpose.

X. Discipline of Sister Churches.

It has already been remarked, that Congregational churches, though independent of each other in respect to all their internal arrangements and management—that is, though no other church has power to control, and no person power to dictate to any Congregational church—yet, every such church regards itself as a part of a great family; each member of which has a common interest in the welfare of every other member, and holds itself bound to give account of its doings to the family when desired so to do.

A prominent design in changing the name of our denomination from *Independents* to *Congregationalists*, was, to avoid the imputation, that our churches were united by no common bond; and that they refused to give to each other any account of their faith or practice. Hence the Platform says: "The term *independent*, we approve not;"* and makes provision for the discipline of *churches* as well as individual members.†

An orderly procedure, in case a church has reason to

* Chap. 2. § 5.

† See Chap. 15, also Mather's Ratio, Art. 9.

think a sister church unsound in doctrine, lax in discipline, or corrupt in practice, would be—to choose a committee to visit the officers of the suspected church. If they could satisfy the visiting committee that their fears were groundless, the state of the case would be reported to the inquiring church, and there the matter would rest. But if the committee could not obtain satisfaction, on reporting this to the brethren, the church would vote to call upon one or more neighboring churches to unite in the labor. These united committees failing to obtain satisfaction, the several churches to which they belonged, would propose a council of churches (not including themselves) to whom the whole business should be submitted. This mutual council having heard the statements of both parties—the churches complaining and the church complained of—would give their opinion, whether there was sufficient ground of complaint against the accused church, to warrant sister churches in withdrawing fellowship from it. If they believed that there was, they would vote to that effect; and recommend to all Congregational churches to withdraw fellowship from the erring member of the family, lest they should become partakers in other men's sins.

It would then be in order, for individual churches to act upon the advice of council. This being accepted and adopted, the offending church is no longer regarded as a sister of the great family of Congregational churches. Its pastor would not be recognized as a minister of the Lord Jesus; its members would not be received to permanent, or even occasional communion; and any church recognizing them as a church of Christ, would be considered as walking disorderly; as countenancing the errors and

sins of the offending member; and would expose itself to be dealt with accordingly.

But, in case the pastor or any members of the offending church should satisfy the council, or the committees of the churches, that they did not approve of, or countenance the conduct of the majority of the church with which they were connected, such pastor or dissenting members would not be included in the act of general exclusion from fellowship, to which the majority of the church were subjected; but would be cheerfully received to occasional or permanent communion; though they would be expected, to use their utmost endeavors to reclaim their erring brethren; and if after due trial they failed in their efforts, to renounce all connection with them, and to unite with some other Congregational church. The remarks in the preface to the Platform, upon this topic—the removal of individuals from corrupt churches—deserve careful consideration.

In all this, however, Congregational churches assume no right nor power to disband and dissolve churches; or to interfere with the right and privilege of other churches to order their affairs as may seem to them most accordant with the truth. They simply assert their own right to say with whom they will hold communion, and with whom they can walk as sister churches. The church from which they have withdrawn fellowship still remains, for aught that they can say or do,—a church—if any are disposed so to regard it. The churches withdrawing wash their hands of the errors and corruption complained of. To their own master, the erring are left to stand or fall.

XI. Minor points, on which Congregationalists differ in their practice.

The ecclesiastical practice of Congregational churches, in relation to the more important matters of which they have cognizance, has now been considered. Those points only have been touched upon, in which there is a very general, if not uniform agreement among consistent and intelligent Congregationalists. In respect to various other things, of minor importance, there is some diversity of practice in the denomination; as, for example, respecting the method of raising the salary of their pastors. Some societies do this by levying a tax on property; others, by taxing pews; or by weekly contributions from the congregation; others still, by voluntary subscriptions, running indefinitely, or for a term of years; or, by voluntary contributions of fuel, and provisions, and clothing, to a fixed amount. Some churches are the owners, in common, of their meeting-houses;* and raise a part, at least, of their pastor's salary by the yearly sale, or lease of the pews. Some few —to their injury—have funds sufficient to support their pastors. A multitude are so poor that they feel unable to do more than raise a part of their pastor's salary; depending on yearly grants from our Home Missionary societies to make up the deficiency.

But in all cases, a Congregational pastor has a stipulated salary; and this is generally fixed at the lowest sum that will afford him a respectable maintenance. The

* Mather, in his Ratio Disciplinae, takes pains to tell his readers that, "A Meeting-house is the term most commonly used by the *New-English* Christians."

practice of Congregational churches, is believed to be entirely uniform in this last particular. If it be not a fundamental doctrine of the denomination—as it is said to have been of some of the early dissenters from the papal hierarchy—that their pastors should be poor, certain it is, that the general *practice* of Congregational churches, very effectually accomplishes this work. It is presumed that in New England, the salaries of the Congregational clergy will not average five hundred dollars a year. That minister cannot be considered a bad economist, who can support a family, keep "a bishop's table," and meet the numerous calls for charity, with a yearly stipend of five hundred dollars.

The provision made for the support of the early Congregational ministers of New England, was *nominally*, less than the average of modern salaries; but, *really* much better. In nearly every country parish—and there were few others, in those days—every pastor was furnished with "a lot of land," which, with a tolerable husbandry, furnished a support for his family. His salary whether much or little, was generally an *addition* to what was indispensable to the comfortable support of his family, and went for the purchase of books, the education of his children, and in some instances, became an accumulating fund for his family after his decease.

The *theoretical practice* of our churches (if I may be allowed such an expression) is *now*, as of old, to ordain a pastor for life: but, the understanding has come to be very general, that the connection between a pastor and his flock will be short-lived.

The denomination, however, are beginning to feel the evils of these temporary arrangements; and are more

disposed, of late, to return to the good old way in which their fathers walked; and to give greater permanency to the connection between pastor and church.

I have dwelt, perhaps, too long upon the *practice* of Congregational churches, and yet it has been but touched upon. Less would not have given anything like a fair view of the *practical operation* of the principles and doctrines of Congregationalism; and without this, a fair estimate could not be formed of the value of that system of church order, government and discipline, which it is the design of these pages to explain and commend.

But little use has been made of arguments to prove the correctness of the practices which have been detailed in the preceding pages; for most of these practices are deductions and inferences from principles and doctrines, presumed to be established as sound and scriptural, by previous testimony and arguments, and must stand or fall with the foundations on which they rest. So far as our practice is merely providential, it is sufficient for our purpose, that it is not unscriptural, nor unlawful; and that the wisdom and experience of ages have sanctioned it,* and now, what

* Those who would examine the ecclesiastical practice of Congregationalists more particularly, are referred to the "*Ratio Disciplinae*" of Prof. Upham; a work of great accuracy and merit; and evidently the result of much reading.

In addition to the personal experience which every pastor must obtain in the course of a ministry of ten years, I have consulted in the preparation of this part of my work, Mather's "Ratio Disciplinae Nov-Anglorum," "The Cambridge Platform," Samuel Mather's learned "Apology for the churches of New-England," "The Magnalia," Wise's "Vindication of the Government of New-England Churches" and "Churches Quarrel Espoused," Several ancient pamphlets upon church government, A valuable discourse by

Continued.

shall we say of Congregationalism in *practice*? Is it not as fair in practice as it is in theory? Does it allow of any disorder or irregularity in the churches? Is there in it any lack of energy and efficiency? Can any churches show a purer or more blameless practice? or one better adapted to effect the great purposes of church organization?—If not, what more can we ask or expect of any system of church government? I would not speak disparagingly of the practice of other religious denominations, but I must be allowed to say—the better I know, the more fondly do I love the practice of the *Puritan, Congregational churches of New England.*

Dr. Emmons on "Ecclesiastical Government" (1826), Dr. Hawes' "Tribute to the Pilgrims," Mr. Bacon's "Church Manual," Mr. Mitchell's "Guide," and Prof. Pond's excellent little work, "The Church."

I have also availed myself of the experience of my revered father, who, for forty years, has been intimately acquainted with the ecclesiastical practice of our denomination; and have submitted my manuscript to the examination of two much respected fathers in the ministry.

Under these circumstances, I may venture to believe that no material error has been fallen into, in detailing the practice of the Congregational churches of New England.

PART V.

ADVANTAGES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

HAVING discussed the principles and doctrines of the Congregational system of church government, and detailed, with some degree of minuteness, the ecclesiastical practice of the denomination, it will not be regarded as an inappropriate conclusion of this part of the work, to enumerate some of *the advantages* which, in the opinion of its advocates, this system of church order and discipline possesses over all others.

In saying what he may upon this head, the writer would not speak invidiously of other systems; much less, of those who have embraced them. He is happy to number among his personal friends those who have adopted almost every form of church government. He cheerfully yields to others, what he claims for himself—the right of private judgment. The pages of this work detail the reasons why he is a Congregationalist—a thorough and hearty Congregationalist; and why those with whom he is associated, have adopted the same system of church order.

Our adoption of these principles, and doctrines, and practice, implies that we suppose the system, as a whole, to possess advantages over any other. Some of these supposed advantages will now be briefly enumerated.

1. *We regard Congregationalism as the most scriptural system of church government.*

We do not assert that all other systems of church government are totally destitute of scriptural authority; nor,

that Congregationalism is *exactly* conformed to the polity of the apostolic churches,—but we do assert, that in our opinion, the order and discipline of our churches, is more nearly in accordance with the scriptural model, than that of any other denomination; and perhaps, as much so, as the difference in our circumstances will admit.

This consideration may be addressed equally to those who deny that the Scriptures furnish any model of church government, and to those who admit that the great outlines, if not the minute particulars of church polity are given in the Scriptures.

Those who deny that the word of God furnishes any pattern for church building, will not object to the admission, that the church which has *most* of scriptural architecture about it, best deserves their regard.

Now, if it has been shown in the preceding pages, that all the fundamental principles, and essential doctrines of Congregationalism, have the sanction of scriptural precept or apostolic usage; and that the authorized practice, of this denomination is in nowise inconsistent with the same precepts and example:—then certainly, Congregationalism is *scriptural;* the word of God *allows*, but does not *require* the adoption of it. And, if Congregationalism is scriptural, then it is *more* scriptural than any other system, in just so much as any other system differs from this in its fundamental principles and doctrines; unless it can be proved that the Scriptures equally countenance different systems.

But, in what particulars do other systems of church government differ from this? All governments may, I conceive, be classed under *three* heads: Monarchical, Aristocratical, and Democratical. The distinctive peculiarities

of these three forms may be intermixed in any given system; but all governments, ecclesiastical as well as civil, may be resolved into three constitutent parts.

The Episcopal form of church government may be regarded as monarchical, the Presbyterian as aristocratical, and the Congregational as democratical. The predominating characteristics of these three forms of church government, are sufficiently expressed by the titles given them.

Episcopacy, strictly speaking, places the government of the church in the hands of *one man*. His power may be that of a despot, or of a limited monarch; according as the people are allowed more or less influence in the government. Romish Episcopacy may be considered a despotism. The pope, is the supreme, uncontrollable head of the church. The mere fact that he is an *elected* despot, does not alter the nature of his government when once established: especially as the people have no voice in his election. His government is absolute, uncontrollable by any authority in the people. The pope's will is sovereign. His word is law.

Congregationalism differs heaven-wide from Romish Episcopacy. And if Congregationalism is scriptural, it is as much more scriptural than Romanism, as the difference between the two.

But, suppose we take the Episcopacy of the Church of England: Is not *that* monarchical? Not so despotic as Romanism; but, as *really monarchical.* The English church is but *a modification* of the Romish. At the reformation she merely changed heads; taking Henry VIII, instead of Clement VII, for her supreme head. The king of England became as truly *pope* of the English church,

as his holiness of Rome had been before. Henry claimed the right to regulate the Church of England as seemed good in his own eyes, and parliament sanctioned that claim. The successors of Henry, with the *crown*, inherited also, *the Church* of England. From Henry, the headship of the church has come down with the crown to the present monarch; and the church of England now has for her "supreme head"—a young, and gay girl, of two and twenty years of age. She "convenes, prorogues, restrains, regulates and dissolves all synods and ecclesiastical convocations;" and all archbishops and bishops are appointed by her. For, although there is the formality of an election of these functionaries by the clergy, yet this, is authorized only by what is called a *congé d'elire*, or leave to elect, which is accompanied by a nomination of the person to be elected.

The archbishops rank in ecclesiastical dignity next to the sovereign; and are supreme in their respective provinces. The archbishopric of Canterbury, comprehending *twenty-one* bishoprics, and that of York, *four*. Next to archbishops, come the bishops. Each bishop is sole judge in his own court of all ecclesiastical offences. The archdeacons, and priests, and deacons, and all the minor orders, are amenable to their respective metropolitans. This whole establishment the kingdom is taxed to sustain. And it is sustained at the enormous expense of nearly NINE MILLIONS OF POUNDS ANNUALLY: a sum greater, by nearly *fifty thousand* pounds, than the income of all the clergy in the world beside.* But, in the government of *this church, the people at large*, have no voice whatever.

How far this system differs from Congregationalism, it is

* American Encyclopedia, Art.—Church.

easy to see. The difference is so great, that if one be *scriptural* the other must be, in many important particulars, *unscriptural.* I speak simply of the *polity* of this church. The *doctrinal* articles are, for the most part sound and scriptural.

If we turn from *English* Episcopacy to *American*, what will be the result of the comparison? The Episcopacy of this country is a scion from the mother land; a continuation of the Church of England, under a new name. The early clergy of this denomination were conformists to the English hierarchy—the very hierarchy, from the persecutions of which the Congregational fathers of New England fled—or, received ordination from the English and Scotch bishops. All their parishes were included in the diocese of London, previously to the revolution. The first Episcopal bishops of America, were consecrated by the archbishops of Canterbury and York;* but not until these functionaries were assured, that no material deviation from the English hierarchy, in doctrine and practice, would be admitted into the American Episcopal church.

The nature of our government does not admit of a "supreme head" of the church; but if, by any revolution in politics, the republican, should be changed for the monarchical form of government, would it not be consistent with American Episcopacy to make the monarch of America the head of the church? Indeed, is not Episcopacy incomplete while destitute of a supreme head? Will it not be found indispensable to the perfect working of the system that this present deficiency should ere long be sup-

* One American bishop had been previously consecrated by the *non-juring* bishops of Scotland.

plied, by the consecration of an archbishop at least, to be "Primate of all America?" I make these suggestions from no unfriendliness to this denomination of Christians. I question not their patriotism, or affection for our civil institutions. It is not of *Episcopalians* that I speak; but, of the *Episcopal form of church government.* Respecting this, I ask: Is it not substantially the same as that of the mother land? and would it not more closely resemble that, if it were possible under a republican government, which tolerates all denominations, and patronizes none? I am not ignorant that modifications of diocesan Episcopacy have been introduced into the "Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States," which render it, to a certain extent, a representative government; but the clergy still govern the church; the bishop is still the limited monarch of his diocese, which embraces all the churches of one or more states. In his diocese he possesses a controlling and directing authority. No church can be formed; no person admitted to "holy orders,"* or "confirmed," i. e. received to the Lord's Supper,† but by his authority; no congregation can receive a pastor, but by his consent;‡ no pastor can remove but by his permission:§—in a word—he is the *head of the church* in his diocese. To aid the several bishops, there is a yearly convention of the clergy and laymen of each diocese, and a sort of triennial parliament, of lords and commons from the several dioceses, which frame canons, and make regulations for the government of the church. Notwithstanding this general convention of the clergy and

* Canons passed in Gen. Conv. 1838, Canons IV and VII.
† " " " " 1832, " XXV " XXVI.
‡ " " " " " " XXX.
§ " " " " " " XXXIII.

laity of the several dioceses, the "house of bishops," who meet by themselves, retain, virtually, the government of the church in their own hands, by possessing "a *full veto* upon the proceedings of the other house." See note to "Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the United States of America." And Bishop White's Memoirs of the Church.

Bishop Hobart was mistaken, when he asserted, in reference to a peculiarity of these assemblies, that "in the *permanent* official stations of the bishops and clergy in her legislative bodies, our own church resembles *all* other religious communities, *whose clergy, also, are permanent legislators.*" The denomination whose principles are advocated in these pages, rejects, as unscriptural and unauthorized, all such legislative power—either *permanent* or *temporary*—of the clergy. We maintain, that Christ has given ecclesiastical power, strictly speaking, to *no body* whatever; that the power of the church is simply *executive*; and that this power is in the hands of *the church*—in its associated, congregational capacity. Or, in other words, that each particular "congregation of faithful men, for whom Christ died," duly organized as a church, have all the power that man has, to administer the laws of Christ's kingdom. And, that councils, and conventions, and synods, are simply *advisory* bodies. In the general polity of their churches; in the number, and rank, and authority of their church officers; in the admission, discipline, and exclusion of members; the two denominations differ, and differ widely too.

American Episcopacy is a *national church*: (See II. canon of 1838, sect. 3). "The jurisdiction of this church extending *in right*, though not always *in form*, to all persons belonging to it, within the United States." The

triennial General Convention, is virtually, "the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States." This body makes general laws (canons) for the government and regulation of all the congregations of the denomination in the United States. The existence of such a body as *a Congregational* church—that is, a church, all of whose members can meet together in one place for the worship of God, and transaction of church business—is not recognized by Episcopalians. Our clergy according to their judgment, are not scripturally ordained; and are not authorized to administer the ordinances, or to preach the gospel. Accordingly, no minister of our denomination, or of any other, except their own, is "permitted to officiate in any congregation of this church," (Canon XXXVI of 1832) until he has been ordained by one of their bishops, after a probation of six months, and "passing the same examinations as other candidates for deacon's orders." Canon VII. sect. 4, of 1838.

These things are alluded to, not by way of complaint, much less to cast odium upon the denomination who have adopted these canons; but simply to show that there is a wide difference between Congregationalism and American Episcopacy; so wide, that one or the other must be essentially erroneous in their views of the general organization of Christian churches. The difference between us does not, however, end here. Episcopalians lay it down as the *first canon* of their church, that "there shall always be *three orders in the ministry*, viz. bishops, priests, and deacons" (Canon I. of 1780), differing from each other in dignity and authority. Congregationalists recognize but *one* order of ministers, of like dignity, and authority, if invested with the pastoral office.

Same subject.

Episcopalians place the power of ordination exclusively in the hands of the bishops. Congregationalists suppose this power to be vested in *the church.*

The two denominations differ as widely in their views of what is necessary to entitle individuals to church membership.

Congregationalists require evidence of repentance towards God, and faith in Christ, as pre-requisites to church membership. Episcopalians do not. See Canon XXIX of 1832, and "the ministration of public baptism of infants," and "the order of confirmation," in "the Book of Common Prayer." Congregationalists give to each church the right to judge who are suitable persons for their fellowship, and none are admitted without a vote of the church. Episcopalians give this right and power to the officiating minister of a parish, and the bishop of the diocese; Canons XXV and XXVI of 1832. The people have no voice in this important business.

Another point on which the two denominations differ, is their methods of disciplining offending church members.

Congregationalists endeavor to follow the direction of the Savior, in Matt. 18: 15—18. Episcopalians give the right and power of discipline into the hands of the officiating minister of the congregation, subject to the supervision of the bishop of the diocese. Canon XLII of 1832, and "the order for the administration of the Lord's Supper," in "the Book of Common Prayer."

And in the discipline of ministers, the difference between us is no less. The doctrine and practice of Congregationalists upon this subject have been sufficiently detailed. The doctrine of the Episcopal church is: "Every minister shall be amenable, for offences committed by him,

to the *bishop*, and if there be no bishop to the *clerical* members of the standing committee of the diocese, in which he is canonically resident, at the time of the charge." Canon V of 1835.

In all these particulars, and others that might be specified—there are essential differences between the two denominations. Indeed our views respecting the entire order and discipline of a church of Christ, are so unlike, that if either is scriptural, the other must be *unscriptural.*

I flatter myself that it has been shown in the course of these pages, that the essential peculiarities of Congregationalism were found in the churches which were organized by the apostles ; and that these features were retained substantially by the churches of the first and second centuries at least.

But we look in vain to the Scriptures for any such system of church order and discipline in the apostolic churches, as "The Canons and Constitution of the Episcopal church, of the United States" presents. We therefore prefer Congregationalism, because it is in our view, more nearly conformed to the apostolic and scriptural models, than is Episcopacy.

The grounds of our preference for Congregationalism over Protestant Episcopacy, having been briefly stated, we turn now to another branch of the same family—"*The Methodist Episcopal Church.*" "The government of this church," says one of its leading members, "is *strictly Episcopal.*" Soon after the establishment of an "Episcopate" in the Protestant Episcopal church in the United States, Dr. Coke, the presiding bishop of the Methodist Episcopal church in the United States, expressed his entire accordance with the Protestant church, in their order and discipline ; and his earnest wish that the two denomi-

nations might be united.* The Methodist church, like the Protestant, is a *national church.* All the different congregations of the denomination in the United States, go to constitute "*The Methodist Episcopal Church.*"† "The spiritual and temporal business of [this] church" is under the general supervision of six bishops; who have the control and direction of more than two thousand travelling preachers, and numerous local preachers.

The United States are divided by the bishops into twenty-eight "Conferences" or dioceses, in each of which there is a "Yearly Conference," or meeting of all the travelling preachers, and such as are eligible to this office in the Conference; which, with the presiding bishop, transact the business of the diocese or conference.

From these yearly conferences, a number of delegates—one for every twenty-one members—go up to form the "*General Conference.*" These conferences answer to the General and State Conventions of the Protestant church; with this essential difference—*no lay delegates are admitted* by the Methodist discipline, to either the yearly or general conference; and yet, these bodies, with the bishops, have the control and government of the entire Methodist church.

The several congregations seem to have no voice in the selection of preachers, or the election of their pastors. The general conference chooses the bishops ("Discipline," Chap. I. sect. 4), the yearly conferences choose the trav-

* See his letters to Bishop White, in "Memoirs of Episcopal Church in United States," pp. 425—431.

† My guide in the following delineation is "The Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church," "Letters on Methodism," "Encyclopedia of Relig. Knowl." and Buck's Dictionary.

elling deacons and elders, (Dis. sect. 6 and 7,) and present them to the bishops for ordination. (Ibid.) The bishops appoint the presiding elders, (Dis. sect. 5,) who are virtually *bishops* in their respective districts. Sect. 5.

The presiding elders, the travelling elders, the deacons, and the preachers,* are all under the direction of the bishops, who station them where they think proper, and move them when they judge best, subject to certain general restrictions. Sects. 4, 5 and 8, and Ans. 11 and 12.

Every conference is divided into several *districts*, over each of which a *presiding elder* is placed, (Dis. I. sect. 5,) who has the control and direction of all the travelling and local preachers within the district. Discip. I. sect. 5.

Every district is divided into several "*Circuits*," embracing several congregations or societies. Each of these circuits is supplied with travelling preachers, deacons, elders, or "preachers;" more or less exhorters;† local preachers; and three or more "stewards," who have charge of the temporalities of the circuit. Dis. Part II. sect. 3.

Every congregation is divided into "*Classes*" of about twelve persons; to each of which "*a leader*" is appointed. Dis. Part II. sect. 1.

"The special charge" of each circuit, is intrusted to one of the travelling ministers of the circuit. He licences

* "A preacher" is a person on trial for admission to "full connection." Dis. Chap. I. sect. 8.

† "*Exhorters*," and what are called "*local preachers*"—are persons, not connected with the conference, not supported by its funds, nor devoted entirely to the ministry; usually men who are engaged in some secular employment, but who exhort or preach occasionally, as circumstances may require.

"the unordained local preachers* and exhorters;" he appoints and removes, as he judges proper, all the class leaders and stewards on the circuit;† and has the general oversight and direction of all the preachers and exhorters, and stewards and leaders, and of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the circuits. See Dis. I. sect. 9.

The people, composing the Methodist church, seem to have no voice in the election of one of the above officers, into whose hands the management of their secular and ecclesiastical affairs is committed. The bishops, the presiding elders, and the travelling preachers control everything. John Wesley was certainly correct, when he said of himself and his Methodist brethren—"WE ARE NO REPUBLICANS."‡ Richard Watson, a standard writer among the Methodists, says: "*A popular form of church government* * * *could only be tolerable* in very small isolated societies, and that in the times of their greatest simplicity and love." "Theological Institutes," Part IV. chap. 1.

The system of church government which has now been briefly detailed, lays no claim to a divine origin. See Articles of Religion, Art. XXII; it originated with Mr. Wesley. In 1784 he ordained, by the imposition of his own hands, Thomas Coke, for the episcopal office in America, "and *commissioned* and *directed him* to set apart

* The *ordained* local preachers, are either persons who were once travelling preachers, or such persons as have been specially recommended to the bishop for ordination.

† "As long as I live," said Mr. Wesley, "the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists."

‡ See Letter to John Mason.

Francis Asbury * * for the same episcopal office." Dis. sect. 1. By their hands the present clergy of this church have chiefly received ordination.

I need not stop to show how unlike Congregational usage all these things are, or how contrary to our principles is this entire organization.

In several other particulars Wesleyan Methodism differs quite as widely from Congregationalism. In the admission of members to the church, the Wesleyan mode is briefly this: All "who desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins," are formed into classes, of twelve persons in each; and a leader is appointed to meet them weekly, "to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort [them] as occasion may require." After a probation of six months, and nothing occurring to contradict their original profession of "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins," they are, after baptism, considered as members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Dis. Chap. II. sect. 1 and 2.

I do not find that any person has aught to say respecting the admission of members into "full connection" but the class leader and the leader of the circuit. The process seems to be briefly this: The class leader recommends to the circuit leader, any person having belonged to his class for six months, whom he judges suitable for church fellowship; the circuit leader gives the person "a ticket" of admission to the church, and reads his name as "received," at the next Quarterly meeting of the circuit. See Dis. II. sect. 1 and 2.

In the discipline of erring and offending persons, there is not, so far as I can discover, any reference to the 18th chap. of Matthew.

The discipline of erring and offending persons.

The method pursued with those who are not in "full connection," that is, are still members, on probation of a class, is thus described in the Discipline: "We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls." Chap. II. sect. 1 and 7. His name is read at the next Quarterly meeting, by the "official minister," as "excluded" from the society, (Dis. II. sect. 2.) and thus the matter ends.

The process with those who have been admitted to church privileges, is briefly as follows: If a person is accused of a crime sufficient, if true, to exclude from the kingdom of grace and glory, the accused and the accuser are brought together "before the society of which he is a member, *or a select number of them*, in the presence of a bishop, elder, deacon, or preacher;" and if found guilty by a majority of the persons thus assembled, the discipline says: "Let *the minister* or preacher who has the charge of the circuit, *expel him.*"

In cases of a less aggravated character, "a preacher or leader" gives private reproof first, "on second offence he may take one or two faithful friends," "on a third offence let the case be brought before the society, *or a select number;* and if there be no sign of real humiliation, the offender must be cut off." Disc. II. sect. 7.

It should be remarked, that although "the society or a select number" have the privilege of saying whether, in their opinion the accused is guilty or innocent, yet they have no power to acquit or exclude the offender. The presiding minister has a veto upon the vote of society: indeed, "the society or a select number" act only the part

of advisors to the minister. "If [he] differ in judgment from the majority of the society or the select number," he may refuse to act agreeably to their judgment, and refer the matter to "the ensuing Quarterly meeting," * * "and the majority of the ministers, travelling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders present, *shall finally determine the case.*" Dis. II. sect. 8, in the old editions—sect. 7, in the ed. of 1839.

It thus appears that *the people*, have, in fact, no power to *exclude* from their society, any more than they have *to admit* into it.

Now, believing as we do, that Christ has given the keys of the church to the people composing that church, we must of necessity, prefer Congregationalism to Methodism.

The next great denomination of Christians whose church polity differs from the Congregational, is the *Presbyterian.* I denominate this *aristocratical*, because it recognizes no presiding and controlling head, under the title of a bishop. Its clergy are all on a footing of equality. Each congregation has the right of electing its own officers. These consist of a pastor, ruling elders, and deacons, in number according to the wants of the congregation.* Thus far the difference between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism is not very essential: but, from this point, the two denominations rapidly diverge. A radical difference between us is found in our definitions

* They cannot, however, *call* a pastor except it be *through* the Presbytery to which the church belongs. Neither can they have a pastor ordained or installed over them, except it be by the consent and concurrence of their own presbytery, and that with which the candidate is connected. See "Form of Gov." chap. 15 and 16.

One of its radical principles. The church session.

of *a church*. One of the "radical principles of Presbyterian church government is:—That the several different congregations of believers, *taken collectively*, constitute *one church* of Christ, called emphatically—*the Church*."*

This principle is the ground work of all our difference of government and discipline.

Acting upon this principle each Presbyterian congregation is governed, not by the united brethren thereof, but by—"*The Church Session;*" that is, by the pastor and ruling elders of the congregation, who are "charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation. For which purpose, they have power to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of the church; to call before them offenders and witnesses, being members of their own congregation, and to introduce other witnesses, where it may be necessary to bring the process to issue, and when they can be procured to attend; to receive members into the church; to admonish and rebuke, to suspend, or exclude from the sacraments those who are found to deserve censure; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation; and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the church."†

Thus it appears, that "The Church Session" is, virtually, *the church*. Some three or four men are invested with authority to control and manage all the affairs of the congregation. And these men are *permanent* officers; independent of the congregation, and after their election, not

* See "Form of Gov. of Presb. Chh. in U. S." p. 397. 18mo. 1821.

† Plan of Gov. Chap. 10. § 6.

subject at all, to the controlling voice of the brethren. They can be removed from office only by death, or regular trial for misdemeanors. I speak particularly, of the ruling elders; who are considered as the representatives of the congregation. The pastor, if obnoxious, may, undoubtedly be induced to remove by other means; but not without the concurrence of the presbytery. The government of each congregation is, then, to all intents and purposes, *aristocratical.*

From the decisions of this court an appeal may be made to a *higher*, called "*the Presbytery.*" This is composed "of all the ministers, and one ruling elder, from each congregation within a certain district," larger or smaller, according to circumstances.

The presbytery has, substantially, the same power over *all* the congregations within its limits, that the church session has over a single congregation.

From the decisions of this *second* judicatory, an appeal may be made to a *third;* called "*the Synod.*" This is composed of the ministers and elders of at least *three* presbyteries. This court exercises a controlling influence and authority over all the presbyteries, church sessions, and congregations within its bounds.

From this body an appeal may be carried up to the "General Assembly;" which is the highest judicatory of the Presbyterian church. This is the end of controversy—or, perhaps I should say—the *reservoir*, into which all obstinate controversy finally runs; to be disposed of as it best may be.

This body is thus constituted: Every presbytery is entitled to send one minister and one ruling elder; and, if the presbytery embraces more than *nine* ministers, it may

send *two* ministers, and an equal number of ruling elders; and so on; *one* minister and *one* elder for every *nine* ministers in any presbytery.

The General Assembly has the same authority over the *whole church* that each of the inferior judicatories has over the particular portion assigned to its care. It is the bond of union among all the congregations. It is the general assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States —*the Presbyterian church itself.*

No one will deny that this system of church government is orderly and methodical; that its movements are systematic and regular: but the question at issue is—where is the scriptural model and authority for all this? I go not into the specification of objections to this system—I will not dwell upon the recent developments of the workings of this consolidated system of church government; but, with the Scriptures in his hands, I put it to any unbiassed mind to decide, which is the more *scriptural* form of church government, the Presbyterian or the Congregational.

It is deemed unnecessary to go into any further comparison of different forms of church order and discipline. All other denominations are believed to recognize more or less of the general principles of government which have been already enumerated and may be classed under one or other of these great denominations, as the peculiarities of one or the other predominate. The Calvinist Baptists are thorough Congregationalists in their government. Indeed, they are one with us, so far as the principles of church polity are concerned. The Freewill Baptists, recognize a form of government, and order, substantially Congregational. "Government is vested primarily in the

churches, which are usually composed of such believers as can meet together for worship."*

The Protestant Methodists, or Reformed Methodists have introduced into their government the *representative* principle; allowing the laity an equal voice with the clergy in their church judicatories. They do not recognize the order of bishops, as distinct from that of elders; but, in most other particulars, symbolize with the Protestant Episcopal church, in their government.

"The Christian Connection," maintain the strict independence of the churches. So do the Unitarians.

Believing Congregationalism to be entirely scriptural, we are constrained to regard this form of church order and discipline as *more* correct and scriptural than any other, in just that proportion in which any other varies, in essential points, from this. And, in the maintenance of this opinion of our favorite model, we do not regard ourselves as guilty of any arrogance in relation to other systems of church government; for, consistently with our principles we can do no less than to esteem our own, above all others. We maintain that the Scriptures are a sufficient guide to all that is essential to the good order and correct discipline of a church of Christ. We have carefully examined the Scriptures to ascertain what this order and discipline should be; and have arrived at conclusions, which these pages partially, at least, detail. If in our deductions we have not erred, then, in our conclusion we are correct, that *of all the systems of church government, Congregationalism is the most scriptural.* And this we

* Elder Beede, in Relig. Encyclopedia.

conceive to be one of the advantages—and not a trifling one, either—which this system possesses over every other.

2. Another advantage of Congregationalism is, that *it encourages self-government beyond that of any other system.* Next to the duty of *knowing* oneself, is that of *governing* oneself. In proportion as you abridge men of the privilege of governing themselves, in just that degree, you encourage the doctrine that men are *incapable* of self-government; and consequently, discourage all efforts to exercise this inalienable, and all-important right. Now the Congregational system of church government, beyond all others, encourages every man to exercise this important birth-right. It teaches him, that Christ has intrusted the management of his kingdom upon earth to the hands of his people; with only certain general rules, as landmarks for their guidance. He who has learned from the Scriptures that Christ has committed *such* interests to his people, will not be slow to perceive, that if men are judged competent to manage affairs which pertain to their *eternal* interests, there is a gross inconsistency in denying them the right to manage the affairs of *state*, which pertain only to the *present life.* The direct tendency of this system of church government, then, is to a democratical form of state government.

The early English Congregationalists, seem to have had no design upon the state, when they asserted their rights as Christians; indeed, they expressly professed their cordial attachment to the monarchical and all but despotic government under which they lived. And this was true of the *Brownists*, even—the pioneers of our denomination—who were rigid separatists from the Episcopal church, and often violent in their denunciations against those who up-

held it; and who denied the right of governments to interfere *at all* with the affairs of the church.

Penry, one of the last of the Brownists who suffered death for his religious sentiments, during the reign of Elizabeth, when accused of disloyalty, protested against the accusation; declaring that the queen had a daily remembrance in his prayers: and with his dying breath, sent the assurances of his loyalty to her majesty. Nevertheless, the politicians of those times were not slow to perceive the natural tendency of these principles of church government; and could not be persuaded, that the men who claimed independence in *church matters*, did not aim at the same independence in *civil affairs*. Hence it was, that the persecution of the Brownists, during Elizabeth's arbitrary reign, was even more violent than that of the Protestants under the bloody Mary, Elizabeth's popish predecessor.

However it may have been with the English Independents, while they remained in their native land, it is very obvious that the Leyden church early entertained democratical prepossessions in respect to civil government. How much influence their residence in Holland may have had in modifying their views, it is difficult to say; but it is clear, that the very first act of the emigrating Pilgrims, in a civil capacity, was one which savored strongly of democracy.

Before landing upon the rock of Plymouth, they drew up and subscribed an instrument, by which they covenanted and combined together, "*into a civil body politic;* to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws and ordinances, acts, constitutions, and officers, from time to time, as should be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony." "This brief, but com-

prehensive constitution of civil government," says Pitkin, "contained the elements of those forms of government peculiar to the new world." From the outset, the English government were jealous of the spirit of independence manifested by the Pilgrims; and, to counteract this, the project of introducing *Episcopacy*, and a governor-general over the colonies of New England, was early entertained by the English court. The commissioners appointed by Charles II, in 1664, to visit New England, with "full power and authority to heare and receive, and to examine and determine, all complaints and appeales in all cases and matters;" or in other words to overturn the government of the colonies, if not found sufficiently loyal—these commissioners reported of Massachusetts—"Their way of government is *Commonwealth-like;* their way of worship is rude, and called *Congregational.*"* The last word in this sentence —whether by design or not—explains the first clause. That the English government were prepared to believe this report, is evident from the fact that Lord Clarendon, in his draft of the plan for sending over commissioners, declared, that the colonies "*were already hardened into republics.*" When the struggle for civil independence actually began in this country, it was found that New England, the hot bed of Congregationalism, in which, in 1760, there were 440,000 Congregationalists, out of 500,000 inhabitants—was "the hot bed" of revolutionary principles too. And to this form of *church* government, we unquestionably owe our peculiarly free and excellent forms of *state* government.†

* Hutchinson, Vol. I. App. No. 15, and Am. Ency., Art. New England

† "Several years before the American revolution, there was,

Congregationalism promotes general intelligence.

To those who regard a republican form of government as the gift of God, and the birthright of man, it will be no slight recommendation of Congregationalism, that it favors, if it does not *unavoidably* lead to, this form of civil government.*

3. Another important advantage of this popular form of church government, is, that *it promotes general intelligence beyond any other.*

As no people are fit to manage their *civil affairs*, unless intelligent and virtuous, so no body of men are qualified to conduct *ecclesiastical affairs*, who are destitute of intelligence and piety. The motive, in either case, to preparation for self-government, is well nigh irresistible. Every

near the house of Mr. Jefferson, in Virginia, a church which was governed on Congregational principles, and whose monthly meetings he often attended. Being asked, how he was pleased with the church government, he replied that it had struck him with great force, and interested him very much; that he considered it the *only form of pure democracy that then existed in the world*, and had concluded that it would be the best plan of government for the American colonies." See an able article on Congregationalism in Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.

* A writer in the London Quarterly Review (Vol. XVI. pp. 517, 518), as quoted by Dr. Wisner in his address at Plymouth, 1831, says: "It soon became apparent (in the reign of Elizabeth in England) that they (the Puritans) *tended naturally towards* republicanism; for certain it is, that *monarchy* and *Episcopacy*, the throne and the altar, are much more nearly connected than writers of bad faith, or little reflection have sought to persuade mankind. Besides *this insensible, but natural inclination towards democracy, which arises from the principles of a popular church government*, there was another cause why the current should set in that direction; it was only under Commonwealths that the Puritans saw their *beloved discipline flourish*."

Congregationalist is expected to take part in transacting the most important business that is done on earth—the business of the church of Christ. He recognizes his accountability to Christ for the manner in which he does the work assigned him. He feels—if he feels as he ought—that there is deep responsibility incurred by him. Acting under this conviction he is constrained to seek that preparation of heart and mind which, alone, will fit him to act well his part as a Congregational professor.

I would not be understood to say, that such are actually the feelings and practice of all who embrace this form of church government; for many, we have reason to fear, are *nominal* Congregationalists, who have little acquaintance with the nature and operation of the principles which they profess; and no suitable sense of the responsibilities which they incur in transacting the momentous business of a Christian church. I speak not of all who profess this system; but of the *tendency* of the system itself, and, of its *actual results* in multitudes of instances.*

In saying what I have of the tendencies of Congregationalism, I would not be understood to intimate that other denominations do not encourage intelligence and piety among their members; but this I do intend to say, that the more free any system of government may be, and the greater the responsibility laid upon men, the stronger will be the motive to be intelligent, in order to manage that

* I have recently met with the remark—I know not exactly where—that the French nation are much less frivolous since their revolution than formerly. The responsibility of sustaining the government for which they have fought, makes them comparatively grave. A sense of responsibility always makes men thoughtful, and sober-minded.

government, and to meet that responsibility. Now, as in no denomination so much is expected of the mass of the church as in ours, so in none are intelligence, and other suitable qualifications for church membership, so urgently demanded. Other forms of church government favor these things, just in proportion as they approach towards, or recede from, the standard of pure Congregationalism.*

* In reply to a letter of inquiry, whether there were any Congregational churches, in a particular section of our country; an intelligent correspondent says—"No." And assigns, as a reason, the want of general intelligence among the people of that section of country.

Congregationalism unquestionably demands a greater measure of religious intelligence, in the mass of the church than any other system of church government. "I do sincerely think," says my correspondent, "that *out* of New England, it is exceedingly difficult to make Congregational churches live: and why? Because out of New England, there is (comparatively speaking) only here and there an enlightened man. *He* must be an *elder* and take care of the rest."

Richard Watson, already referred to, grounds an objection to "a popular form of church government," on the supposed ignorance and youth and inexperience of the mass of every religious community. He speaks with a sort of holy horror, of "referring every decision to members and suffrages, and placing all that is good and venerable, and influential among the members themselves, at the feet of *a democracy*." Institutes, Part IV. chap. 1.

It is too obvious to require argument, that the very *necessity* for intelligence, will, with good men, be a strong inducement to become intelligent. And, it seems to me altogether reasonable to believe, that in these very communities where it is now supposed that the want of intelligence forbids the existence of Congregational churches, there would have been a vastly greater amount of religious knowledge, if such churches had long ago been established among them. If the intelligence of New England, originally es-

To Cong. principles we owe most of our Schools and Colleges.

Some of the legitimate effects of this system are seen in the efforts of the Pilgrims to establish schools and seminaries of learning, as well as to plant churches and to propagate the gospel in this land of their exile; and these were established, mainly, as *auxiliaries to their churches.*

Scarcely had these venerable men felled the forest of New England, when they began to provide means to ensure the continuance of their churches and the stability of their civil government. "*Learning and religion,*" they wisely judged to be "*the firmest pillars of the church and commonwealth.*" Harvard college, which had previously existed as a high school,* was established at Cambridge as early as 1638, *eighteen years* only after the first tree was felled in New England.

To Congregational principles we are indebted for most of the colleges of New England. From the same source has flowed down to us that system of common schools, which, notwithstanding its defects, has so long and so richly blessed our land and the world.† The same spirit has founded and endowed all the Theological Seminaries of New England.

The influence of Congregationalism in establishing theological and literary Institutions at the South and West is well known.

Can any man consider the facts now alluded to, without perceiving that this system of church order and discipline is preeminently favorable to general intelligence?

tablished Congregationalism, it is equally true, that Congregationalism, has preserved for New England that intelligence.

* "In 1636 the general court gave £400 towards a public school at Newton." Hutchinson.

† See Appendix, No. 6.

Cong. best preserves the churches from general corruption.

4. Another advantage of this system of church government and discipline is, that *it presents the most efficient barrier to the inroads of heresy, and false doctrine, and general corruption into the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

I am not ignorant that some persons regard Congregationalism as the very parent and nurse of all heresy, and of all errors in doctrine and religious practice with which the country is now, or ever has been afflicted.

The very independency of our churches, and the freedom of our government, the right which our churches claim to choose whom they will for pastors, and to adopt what articles of faith, and to pursue what particular practice they please, are regarded among the most objectionable features of this system. That this liberty may not be abused, I shall not contend. That any other than a *virtuous people* are capable of *self-government*, I do not believe. That the Congregational system of church government is unsuited to any but truly *pious persons*, I have already asserted: for none others was it designed. But for these, it is admirably adapted. To such, there is no danger of intrusting the liberty of judging and choosing for themselves. An unconverted, proud, ambitious, worldly minded church member may, it is true, do more injury in a Congregational church, than in any other. For men of this description our church government was never designed. Such men, however intelligent, have not the *first*, and *most important* of all qualifications for church membership. But, let our churches be constituted and kept pure by discipline as they ought to be, and there is no danger of intrusting to them the power of electing their

Objection, that bad members cannot be kept out—answered.

own officers, making their own by-laws, and regulating all their own affairs, under Christ.

It may, perhaps, be said: "It is impossible to keep out unworthy members; they are in the church now, and they will always be found there." It is true, this matter demands great watchfulness on the part of our churches; and, after all, some unworthy members may creep in: if, however, the great mass of the church be sound and pious, there will be, under ordinary circumstances, comparatively little danger from the unsoundness of a few individuals. Certain it is, that there is much less danger that the *majority of a church* will become unsound and heretical, than that *a single man*, or a *few men*, constituted governors of the church, will swerve from the faith. Every system of church government, which takes the power out of the hands of the brethren—or the church itself—places it in the hands of individuals. If these are members of the particular church which they control, the danger to the church will be, in proportion to the *fewness* of her governors: that is to say, there will be more danger that *one* man will become unsound and heretical, than that *five* will; and more danger that *five* will swerve from the truth, than that *one hundred* will. And, should these governors be chosen by the churches themselves, the state of the case will not be materially altered.

Upon this subject ecclesiastical history lifts an admonitory voice. It is notorious that when the control of the churches fell into the hands of synods, then the purity of the churches began visibly and rapidly to decline. This declension became more serious, as the influence of *many*, in the government of the churches diminished to a *few;* and it became *total*, when "THE MAN OF SIN" mounted the

papal throne, and claimed to be *the Head of the Church;* the *Vicegerent of Christ;* the *Infallible Interpreter of the mind of the Spirit,* and the *Unerring guide of the faithful.*

Now, inasmuch as our Congregational polity places all church power in the hands of the brethren of the church, it provides the greatest possible safeguard against the inroads of heresy.

Then, again, the *independency* of the churches, furnishes a further barrier against general defection from the faith. The more closely you connect the different communities of Christian professors for purposes of government, the more readily are they affected by each other. Bring these associated communities under the government of one man, or of a few men, and you increase the danger of corruption in the whole mass, in proportion to the intimacy of the association and the influence and power of its governors. But, should a Congregational church become heretical in its faith and erroneous in its practice, it will not necessarily affect sister churches. It will not, except by the force of bad example. Each church standing independently of every other, so far as its internal management is concerned, has the means of defence in its own hands. It can shut the door; and no man can open it.

Then, in respect to its *teachers* this system furnishes as complete a barrier against false and dangerous doctrine, as it is possible to raise. It recognizes no man's right to send to a church a preacher, or to place over it a pastor. We know no metropolitan—no general or yearly conference having authority to say to this man, go; and to another come—no presbytery to tell us whether we may, or may not call a pastor. Each church judges and chooses for itself. Every brother in the church has a perfect right

to object to the call of a pastor; and every man's vote has equal influence in an election. The whole church being constituted judges and being qualified by intelligence and piety to act their parts, the danger of being imposed upon by an unsuitable man, is comparatively small; especially if the scrupulous care of our fathers in trying their candidates for settlement be imitated by their sons.*

But, should a pastor prove an unsound and dangerous man, his influence does not necessarily affect any church but his own: and this has the power to discipline the offender; and thus bring him to repentance for his errors, or at least to make known his true character, and thus impair his ability to injure others.

Thus does Congregationalism protect the churches from heresy and error. Thus does it provide a remedy, in case all previous caution should fail, for the extirpation of everything false and dangerous.

It is not denied, that notwithstanding all, errors in doctrine and practice, have crept into our churches. And into what denomination of professing Christians have they not gone? Who—what—can guard effectually against the depravity and deceitfulness of human nature? A Judas was among "the twelve." A Simon Magus, and "damnable heresies" corrupted the apostolic churches. Congregationalists claim not entire exemption from error. But, who shall cast the first stone at us? Shall the church of Rome? We point her to "the mark of the beast" upon her forehead. Shall the high-church Episcopacy of England? We beg her to stop long enough to reflect on the

* It was not uncommon for candidates for settlement to be on trial for several months, before they received a call Our fathers had no fellowship with the *touch-and-take* system of modern days.

Arminianism of Laud's administration, and the rapid strides which she made towards popery itself during his reign. Or if she prefer something of later date, we point to the admitted diversity of religious sentiment which now exists among her clergy; and this, too, upon fundamental points, in spite of her liturgy, and creed, and subscriptions, and test oaths. Shall the Protestant Episcopal church of this country, claim greater purity? Will it be denied, that even in this country, the line is becoming more and more distinct between high-church and low-church?—that it is not uncommon even now, to designate their clergy as evangelical or Arminian?

The very extensive prevalence of Arianism and Unitarianism among the Presbyterians of England, and the diversity of sentiment which prevails in the Presbyterian church of the United States, prove the entire possibility of "grievous wolves" entering the Presbyterian fold, high as are its walls, guarded as are its entrances.

While, therefore, we claim not for our system of church order and discipline, that it is a complete defence from error, to which all denominations are more or less exposed, —we confidently believe that the Congregational churches of Great Britain and America will bear a *favorable* comparison, in point of purity, with those of any other denomination in either country.

It would be easy to swell this list of advantages of Congregationalism. The simplicity of its organization, and the directness and efficiency of its operations, might be dwelt upon; the absence of motives to pride and worldly ambition, which characterizes this organization; the motives to diligence and activity which it suggests to its clergy; and, above all, the powerful tendency of the system to make men truly pious, might be urged.

These, and other topics, might be discussed, perhaps, with advantage to readers—certainly with pleasure to the writer; but he has already far exceeded his intended limits; and, if anything like a just estimate of the system advocated in these pages, has been expressed, there can be no occasion to say more, to commend to the regard, to the confidence, to the love of the descendants of the Pilgrims of New England, a system which their fathers considered as essential to the highest welfare of their posterity, to the promotion of holiness in the land, and to the advancement of the Divine glory in the world.

I know not that I can better conclude this commendation of New England Congregationalism, than by quoting the words of the learned and pious Oaks, president of Harvard College from 1675 to 1681. In an election sermon he says: "Consider what will be the end of receding or making a *defection* from the way of church *government* established among us. I profess, I look upon the discovery and settlement of the Congregational way, as the boon, the gratuity, the largess of Divine bounty, which the Lord graciously bestowed on his people, that followed Him into this wilderness; and a great part of the *blessing* on the head of *Joseph*, and of them who were *separate from their brethren.* These good people that came over, showed more love, zeal, and affectionate desire of *communion* with God in *pure* worship and ordinances, and did more in order to it than others; and the Lord did more for them, than for any people in the world, in showing them the *pattern* of His house, and the true *scriptural way* of church government and administrations. God was certainly in a more than ordinary way of favor present with his servants in laying of our foundations, and in settling the way of

church order according to the will and appointment of Christ. Consider what will be the *sad issue* of revolting from the way fixed upon, to one extreme or to another, whether it be to *Presbyterianism* or *Brownism;* as for the *Presbyterians*, it must be acknowledged that there are among them, as pious, learned, sober, orthodox men, as the world affords; and that there is as much of the *power of godliness* among that party, and of the spirit of the good *old Puritans*, as among any people in the world. And for their way of *church government*, it must be confessed, that in the day of it, it was a very considerable step to *reformation.* The reformation in king Edward's days was then a blessed work.

"And the reformation of *Geneva* and *Scotland* was then a large step, and in many respects purer than the other. And for my part, I fully believe that the *Congregational way* far exceeds both, and is the *highest step* which has been taken towards reformation, and for the substance of it, it is the very same way that was established and practised in the *primitive times*, according to the institution of Jesus Christ." *

* Magnalia, Vol. II. pp. 64, 65 (ed. 1820).

APPENDIX.

In the forms of letters and votes, etc. given in the following pages, I shall not, of course, be understood as settling the precise form in any given case; or, as intimating that a hundred other modes of expression, etc. may not be equally proper. But, having had occasion to know that intelligent church members are often at a loss how to express themselves suitably in communications of this description, I have thought that some brief forms would be acceptable, as guides to the general style, etc. of these communications. I have studied brevity for obvious reasons: should any judge these forms too skeleton-like, they can clothe them to their taste.

APPENDIX.

No. 1.

LETTER MISSIVE FROM A COMMITTEE OF PERSONS WISHING TO BE ORGANIZED INTO A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

———, *January* 1, 1840.

To the Congregational Church of Christ in A.

Reverend and Beloved,

Whereas the Great Head of the Church has disposed a number of persons in the town of B. to unite together for public worship and the celebration of religious ordinances, under a Congregational form of church government, the undersigned, in behalf of their brethren, respectfully solicit your attendance, by your Rev. pastor and a delegate, at the house of ———, on the first day of February, at ten o'clock, A. M., to take into consideration the propriety of organizing us into a church of Christ; and, should such a step be deemed expedient, to assist in the appropriate services.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, we subscribe ourselves

Yours in the gospel,

———
———
——— } *Committee of Arrangements.*

No. 2.

CALL FROM A CHURCH TO A PASTOR-ELECT.

*To Mr.** —— [*or, the Rev. Mr.* ——].

The undersigned, a committee of the Congregational

* If the pastor-elect has not been ordained, it is proper to address him as *Mr.* and not Rev.

church of Christ in ——— would respectfully submit to your consideration the following votes of the church:

At a regular meeting of the Congregational church in ——— on the second day of Dec.

Voted, That the members of this church are entirely satisfied with the piety, orthodoxy, and ministerial qualifications of Mr. —— [or Rev. Mr. —— as the case may be].

[The state of the votes should be given, whether unanimously, or by what majority.]

Voted, That Mr. —— be invited to become the pastor and teacher of this church.

Voted, That brethren A, B, and C, be a committee to communicate these votes to Mr. —— and to make other arrangements which may be necessary to carry out the wishes of the church in relation to the premises.*

Signed, I. D., *Moderator.*
K. E., *Clerk.*

The committee are happy to say, that an entire unanimity of feeling [or as the case may be] prevails in the parish, in reference to your settlement among us. The doings of the society will accompany this communication.

And now, dear sir, permit us personally, and in behalf of the church which we represent, to express our earnest desire that you will accept of our invitation to the pastoral office among us; and name an early day for the ordination services.

Praying that God would guide you to a favorable decision, we subscribe ourselves, in behalf of the church,

Your brethren in Christ,

———
———
——— } *Committee of the Church.*

———, *Dec.* 5, 1839.

* The other things referred to here, are the calling of a parish or society meeting, for the purpose of concurring with the church, and fixing the salary, etc.

It would be equally proper, perhaps, to have the church vote "*a call*" to the candidate, embodying the substance of the votes, and statements of the committee.

No. 3.

F———, March 1, 1840.

The church of Christ in F——— to the church of Christ in G———, Sendeth Greeting.

Whereas the Great Head of the church hath kindly united the hearts of this church, and the congregation statedly worshipping with us, in the choice of Mr. [or Rev. as the case may be] for our pastor and teacher, and he has accepted our invitation to settle with us in the gospel ministry, and suitable provision has been made for his temporal support, we affectionately solicit your attendance, by pastor and delegate, at the house of Mr. ———, on the first day of April next, at two o'clock in the afternoon, to assist in the examination of the candidate; and, if judged proper, in the ordination services.

May grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you all,

Your brethren in Christ,

——— } *Committee of*
——— } *the Church.*
———

The other churches invited to sit in council, are ——— [here name them.]

Rev. Mr. ——— and delegate will please call upon Mr. ——— for entertainment.

No. 4.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.

To whom it may concern.

This may certify, that the bearer, Mr. —— —— is a member, in regular standing, of the Congregational church in ——. Expecting to be absent from us for some months, and desiring Christian intercourse during his absence, he has requested a letter of introduction to any church of Christ with whom he may wish to commune; he is there-

fore hereby affectionately recommended to the occasional communion and fellowship of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

———, *Pastor of the Cong. Chh.*
[*or, Clerk, as the case may be.*]

[This sort of letter does not require a vote of the church. The pastor, or moderator, or stated clerk, if the church have no pastor, may give the introductory letter. No member should leave the place of his residence for any considerable number of weeks, without taking such a letter.]

No. 5.

LETTER OF DISMISSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

The Congregational Church in ———, to the Congregational Church in ———.

Reverend and Beloved,

The bearer, —— ——, a member of this church, in regular standing, having requested a letter of dismission and recommendation to you, the church have voted the same. When received by you, his particular relation to us will be considered at an end.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,
We are yours in the Lord, in behalf of the church,
———, *Pastor.*
———, *Church Clerk.*

———, *May* 5, 18—.

No. 6.

Note to page 175.

In illustration of the influence of Congregationalism in promoting general intelligence, by the establishment of schools and seminaries of learning, I will quote some paragraphs from Pitkin's "Civil and Political Hist. of U. S." I prefer to give his own language for obvious reasons.

"Primary schools" says he, "first commenced in New

England. Aware of the importance and necessity of information among the people, in order to secure and perpetuate their liberties, the legislators of New England, at an early period made provision for instructing all in the first rudiments of learning. In this, the *clergy*, who were not less distinguished for their literature than their piety, cordially cooperated. In making this provision, for the general and early education of their children, their views were not limited to the single object, though an important one, of making them better men and better citizens, but what was justly deemed by them, of infinitely more importance—*better Christians.* * *

"Schools for general education were established in Boston, in 1635, by the inhabitants of that town; and in 1647, the legislature of Massachusetts declared, by a general law, 'that every township with fifty families should provide a school, where children may be taught to read and write; and that every township of 100 families, should provide a grammar school where youth could be fitted for the University.' This law was substantially adopted in the code of laws established by the colony of Connecticut, in 1650, with a preamble, declaring, in the quaint language of the day, that, 'It being one chief object of that old deceiver, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times, keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times, by persuading them from the use of tongues, so that at least, the true sense of the *original*, might be clouded by false glosses of saint-seeming deceivers; and that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers in church and commonwealth,' etc.

"In the system of New Haven colonial laws, published in 1656, it is ordered, "that the deputy for the particular court, in each plantation in this jurisdiction, for the time being, or where there are no such deputies, the constables and other officers in public trust, shall, from time to time, have a vigilant eye on their brethren and neighbors, within the limits of said plantations, that all parents and masters do duly endeavor, either by their own ability or labor, or by improving such school-masters or other helps and means, as the plantation doth afford, or the family may

conveniently provide, that all their children and apprentices, as they are capable, may, through God's blessing, obtain, at least, so much as to be able to read the Scriptures and other good and profitable books in the English tongue, being their native language, etc."

"In 1663, it was proposed by the court of Plymouth colony, to the several towns within that jurisdiction, as a thing that they ought to take into their serious consideration, that some course may be taken, that in *every town* there may be a school-master set up, to train up children to reading and writing.

"These laws laid the foundation of the system of free schools in New England." Vol. I. pp. 151, 152.

In estimating the influence of Congregationalism in promoting general intelligence, let it be borne in mind that these laws were emphatically *Congregational*—that nearly every man concerned in the formation and execution of them, was a decided Congregationalist. No man can consider these facts without perceiving that the influence of this system of church government is to promote intelligence and piety.

No. 7.

Note to page 137.

It may be proper to apprize the reader, who is not already familiar with the fact,—that those churches and ministers who adopt the consociational system, generally deny the right of a church to discipline its pastor. By "the consociational system," I mean that which is developed in the "Saybrook Articles."

The Rev. Mr. Mitchell (an advocate of that system) in his "Guide to the Principles and Practices of the Congregational churches of New England" (p. 236), says: "A church would, in most cases, find it a most embarrassing and unsafe business to undertake the discipline of its minister. It is wisely relieved from such a duty." And again (p. 235, note): "I do not see how a church in such circumstances (that is, 'in case its pastor becomes hereti-

cal or scandalous,') or at least in certain *supposable* circumstances, can act in its *collective* capacity at all. Who is to *convene* the church? and who is to *preside?* The pastor may refuse to convene it; and if it do convene, may claim to act as its moderator by virtue of his office, [Cam. Plat. Chap. X. § 8,] and in that capacity, if he be a bad man, may effectually embarrass its proceedings."

It may be replied to these objections; that there is scarcely any end to the difficulties which "a bad man," whether he be a minister or layman, may throw in the way of church discipline. It is in vain to think of guarding against all "*supposable*" difficulties. A minister *bad* enough, or *mad* enough, to *insist* upon embarrassing and interrupting the orderly proceedings of a church, under such circumstances, would expose himself to legal process, for disturbing a religious meeting; and a church would be justified in having him arrested, and put under bonds for his good behavior, while they proceeded, under the moderatorship of the senior deacon, to examine the charges against their pastor. And this would be no invasion of the pastor's rights; for, so soon as a regular charge against a pastor is laid before a church, and the church vote to examine that charge, their pastor, is, *virtually*, suspended from the exercise of his pastoral office; and his right to moderate the church for the time being, is transferred to one of the deacons.

Connected with this question, respecting the right and power of a Congregational church to discipline its pastor, is another, namely: *Ought a minister to be a member of the church of which he is pastor?* Those who deny the disciplinary authority of a church over a pastor, take of course, in order to be consistent, the *negative* of the question. Mr. Mitchell says (p. 237): "It is insisted on by some, that a minister shall be a member of the church of which he is the pastor; and subject, 'like any other member,' to its watch and discipline. But neither the reasons, nor the passages from Scripture, which are adduced in support of the position, are satisfactory; and by the great majority of the denomination it is not, I believe, admitted." Again (p. 238): "It seems inconsistent with the relations the pastor sustains to the church, as one whom the Holy Ghost

hath made its overseer, and with the respect which is required to be paid to him for his office sake, that he should be subject to its watch and oversight *in the same manner* as any other member." And again (p. 241): "Leave a minister to the watch and discipline of his *peers*. This is the common privilege of the brotherhood, and ought to be his."

The unsettled state of everything connected with the pastoral office, for a few years past, has, undoubtedly, introduced irregularities into the practice of our denomination upon this point, as well as upon many others. In most cases, the pastoral connection is now formed with the understanding that it will be short-lived. A stipulation is often made, that the connection may be dissolved, by either party—the church or the pastor—giving the other, three months' notice. In other cases, a settlement is made for a stipulated number of years—*five*, being a favorite number. The system of rotation, has been pretty thoroughly introduced into the pastoral office. Our pastors have become *travelling* preachers, *circuit-riders*. In the county where the writer of this is located, there are *thirty-one* Congregational churches. A settlement of ten years, has given him the painful opportunity of witnessing overturns in *twenty-nine*, of these *thirty-one* churches. There is but one church in the county besides his own, which has not changed pastors during the time, and many of them *repeatedly*. Now, if this is a specimen of the state of things in our churches generally, can we wonder that the *practice* of our denomination should be opposed to the admission of ministers as members of the churches of which they are pastors? In this unsettled state of things, it is natural that our churches should be inattentive to the church-membership of their pastors; and *as* natural for our pastors to wish to retain their connection with the churches with which they originally united by profession.

But it was not always so in New England; and our *principles*, as well as the *early practice* of our churches, are diametrically opposed to this innovation.

And, it is believed, that even now, the pastors of our best regulated and most stable Congregational churches, out of Connecticut, will be found to be members of their

own churches. And what is there in this relation inconsistent with the "respect which is required to be paid to a pastor for his office sake?" Nothing more than in the accountability of a presiding officer of a legislative assembly, to the rules of that body. As *church members*, ministers and laymen are on equal footing; they are alike accountable to the laws of Christ's kingdom. The administration of these laws is intrusted to *the church*, as such; and not to any other association of men, however wise or good. A church has no more right to delegate the duty of disciplining *any of its members* to other hands, than it has, to delegate to others the duty of praying, or loving God.

Prof. Upham, in his "Ratio Disciplinae," (p. 167) says: "It is settled, both in principle and practice, that the minister is accountable to his church; and in the first place, *in virtue of his church membership.*

"According to Congregational usage, no person becomes and remains the minister [pastor?] of a church, without also transferring his relationship and becoming a member of the same. The reasons of this are various; but one undoubtedly is, that he may feel himself subject to the needful restraint of its watch and discipline."

Mr. Mitchell intimates that Prof. Upham has been "*misled* by some of the early writers, whom he consulted." If so, the soundest and most learned writers on this subject are unsafe guides.

The Cambridge Platform, "Cotton's Way of the churches in New England," "Cotton's Book of the Keys," "Mather's Apology," and "Mather's Ratio Disciplinae," all maintain this doctrine. Mather's words are: "When a pastor has fallen into scandal, the brethren that are acquainted with it proceed, *as they would with another brother in such cases; only with more special terms of respect and repetition of addresses*, as the relation of a father may call for."

The Cambridge Platform, Chap. 10. § 6, speaking of an incorrigibly offending elder, says: "as the church had power *to call him to office* so they have power according to order (the council of the churches, where it may be had, directing thereto) *to remove him from his office:* and

being now but a member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church that had power to receive him *into their fellowship*, hath also the same power to *cast him out*, that they have concerning any other member."

It is an important principle of Congregationalism that the *call of the church*, and the *acceptance of the same by the pastors elect*, constitute the pastoral relation to any particular church. The ordination is only the *induction into office* of the individual, who, by virtue of his *election*, is entitled to that office.

In chap. 9. § 2, of the Platform, we read: "This ordination we account nothing else but the solemn putting of a man into his place and office in the church, *whereunto he had right before by election;* being like the installing of a magistrate in the commonwealth," etc.

Cotton Mather, in speaking of the doctrines of the fathers of New England, says: "They reckoned not *ordination* to be essential unto the *vocation* of a minister, any more than *coronation* to the being of a king; but that it is only a consequent and convenient *adjunct* of his *vocation* and a solemn acknowledgement of it with an useful and proper benediction of *him* in it." Magnalia, Vol. II. p. 208.

The principle here recognized puts the power of discipline into the hands of the church—and this is clearly the right of the church; no other body has been invested with power by Christ to open and shut the doors of the church —to discipline offenders against the laws of his kingdom. In chap. 8. § 7 of the Platform it is said: "If the church have power *to choose* their officers, and ministers, then, in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have power also to *depose them:* for to open and shut, to choose and refuse, to constitute in office and remove from office, are acts belonging to the same power." Speaking of the power and right of a church to discipline, and even depose its pastor, the learned and excellent Samuel Mather, in his Apology, etc. says: "It is entirely *just and reasonable*, that *particular churches should have this power:* For they are *ecclesiastical societies* confederate, that is to say, they are *churches, before they have officers, and even without* them: And, although they may be in such a state as this, yet even then *a subordinate ecclesiastical power* is under

our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and by HIM delegated unto them: so that, having the *nature and essence of a church* as they surely have, *they may act as such:* and, as it is *natural to all societies and bodies* whatsoever to preserve themselves, *the churches of* CHRIST also are doubtless *furnished with sufficient power for their own preservation and comfortable subsistence.* It follows, therefore, that, if *the elder* of a particular church should be found *guilty of maladministration* and break in upon the known and fundamental privileges which every Christian society has in common with other societies, *that particular church* may and ought, from a sacred regard to the law of *self-preservation, to depose such an arbitrary and tyrannical elder*, if upon their admonitions he do not repent and give them satisfaction.

"Nor indeed can it well be disputed, that the churches in the days of primitive Christianity were possessed of this most valuable right and privilege; when there are such testimonies in the ancient approved writers, which fully demonstrate it.

"It is as clear as the light from that deservedly prized remain of antiquity, CLEMENT'S first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, which is worthy of frequent citations from it, that *the church* of Corinth *at that time, had, and exercised this privilege:* For, he says to them in that epistle, 'We *perceive that ye have removed some, who have performed their office well from the ministry which they were thought to deserve, as having no fault to be found with them: Ye are too contentious, brethren, and too hot about these things which appertain to salvation.*' Now, is it not very plain from these passages, that the *Corinthians* had deposed and laid aside their ministers, *merely because in lesser or indisputable points their judgments did not please them?* 'Tis true the good CLEMENT blames them, and it must be confessed that they deserved to be blamed, for casting off those persons, *who had holily and unblamably performed the duties of their Episcopacy:* But CLEMENT never twits or blames them at all for exercising a power which did not belong to them: no, far from it: All that he faults them for, and indeed all that can be objected against them is, that *they exercised*

the power, of which they were possessed, *in an irregular manner, when the occasion did not require it.*

"And it is also certain, that the particular churches of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, enjoyed this privilege, at least, until the *two hundred and fifty-eighth year* after CHRIST: For, in that year, a Synod convened, in which CYPRIAN presided: And that Synod approved and commended the proceedings of some churches, who had deposed their bishops, upon the application of those churches to the synod in order to obtain their opinion concerning their conduct. As for CYPRIAN's own judgment in this matter, it may easily be seen by reading some of his epistles: For, in one of his epistles, he expressly acknowledges, that in his time *the people had the power, as of choosing worthy ministers*, so likewise *of refusing and casting off those who were not so;* and in another epistle, he affirms, *that this power belongs to the church, and that it was given to the church by divine authority.* And the learned ORIGEN, was of the same mind: For he freely declared to his people, '*If I seem to you to be a* right hand, *and am called a Presbyter and seem to preach the word of God; yet if I shall do anything contrary to ecclesiastical discipline and the rule of the gospel, so that I give scandal or offence to the church, let the whole church conspire and with one consent cut me off, altho' I am their right hand.*' *And this right and liberty of the brethren* for which we plead, is so fully represented by CYPRIAN, and so strongly *proved* to belong to them from passages which he urges *out of the old and new Testament*, that I shall refer you unto him: In the meantime I cannot but transcribe a few sentences from him. '*For this cause*,' *says he*, '*the people obedient to the commands of the* LORD, *and fearing* GOD, *ought to separate themselves from a wicked bishop: For they principally have the power of choosing worthy priests and rejecting the unworthy, which comes from divine authority.*" Nor, may I omit the testimony of the prodigiously learned GROTIUS, with reference to this *right of the people* in the early ages of Christianity: Now he testifies, that it *was not only the right of the people to flee and avoid an unfaithful pastor, but that such a pastor by virtue of the sentence against him lost his*

pastoral right, and whatsoever of that kind was once ascribed unto him.

"To conclude; as JESUS CHRIST has made these churches free in this liberty, it is to be hoped, that they will stand fast in it, as occasion shall require, nor suffer their pastors under their mal-administrations to deprive them of it." See Mather's "Apology for the Liberties of the Churches of New England," pp. 81—85.

If it be objected, that the authorities cited are *ancient*, and that modern Congregationalists have adopted different views and practice; I beg leave to refer to a sermon published in 1826 by that close reasoner and consistent Congregationalist, Dr. Emmons, entitled "The Platform of Ecclesiastical Government, established by the Lord Jesus Christ." At page 16th he says: "If every church be formed by confederation, and has an independent right to exercise all ecclesiastical power, [as he had before shown] then *they have a right to dismiss their own minister, whenever they judge he has forfeited his ministerial character.* Those who have a right to put into office, have a right to put out of office. The church either puts their ministers into office, or delegates power to a neighboring minister to do it for them, which is the same thing as doing it themselves. Therefore, as neighboring ministers could not place a pastor over them without their consent; so they [the neighboring ministers] cannot put away or dismiss their pastor without their consent. *The voice of the church must always be had in every act of discipline.* Now, if a council cannot dismiss a minister without the consent of the church, then it clearly appears, that the right of dismission belongs *solely to the church*, who may dismiss their minister without the advice, or contrary to the advice of a council, if they think he has forfeited his ministerial character; but not otherwise."

None who know Dr. Emmons—and who is there that does not know him by reputation, at least—will question his competency to give an opinion of what is essential to sound Congregationalism. Throughout his discourse he insists that all ecclesiastical power is vested in each duly constituted church, by Jesus Christ, the head of the church. The church is the ultimate appeal in all cases of

discipline, and has an undoubted right to perform all necessary acts of discipline. "It is at the option and discretion of any particular church, whether they shall, or shall not ask counsel in any case of church discipline, and if they do ask counsel of others, their advice is only advisory, which they have a right to accept or reject." Dis. pp. 15, 16.

The above extracts go to show that the doctrine maintained in these pages, has the countenance of one of the most distinguished Congregational divines of modern days; as well as the support of ancient authorities.

If we may erect a distinct tribunal to try *ministers*, we need but one step more and the power of disciplining *any members* is taken from the church. Every minister must be either a member of the church of which he is pastor, or of some other church: To *that* church of which he is a member he is amenable; and to the *discipline* of that church he is subject, just as much as any other member; otherwise, we have the anomaly of a church, professing to believe itself empowered to discipline its members, having within its bosom one, at least, over whom it has no disciplinary power. As a *church member* every minister stands on precisely the same ground as every other member does; he is amenable to the same laws; and his official character cannot, will not shield him. As a church member he has no rights or immunities which other members have not. His superiority over the church is *official* merely,—he is chief among equals.

It is objected that every man should be tried by his "*peers.*" If *pastors* are to be tried by their "*peers*," by whom are the *deacons* to be tried? have not they the same claim to exemption from church jurisdiction that the other officers of the church have?

A difficulty in disciplining a pastor has been raised, on the ground that he is, ex-officio, moderator of the church; and, that it is his duty to convene the church, which he may refuse to do for the purpose of disciplining himself. It is likewise objected that, as moderator, he may throw serious difficulties in the way of the church when together. It is obvious that the same objections lie against all at-

tempts to discipline a senior deacon, who, in the absence of a pastor, would be, ex-officio, moderator of the church.

If it be further objected, that the church is much more liable to be swayed by prejudice, than an association of clergymen: it may be answered, that a pastor may have the advice of a council, if he desire it; and has, therefore, as complete protection from injury as any of his lay brethren, and more than this he cannot reasonably ask.

Sound Congregational principles and practice are decidedly opposed to the doctrine that, a pastor should not be a member of the church over which he presides, and should be free from the disciplinary authority of that church. I am aware that many excellent men are agreed with Mr. Mitchell in his views of these matters; and that the practice of some, at least, of the churches of Connecticut, with which Mr. M. was formerly connected, is in accordance with his views; nevertheless I am constrained to regard this practice as a deviation from primitive Congregationalism, as uncalled for, as it is unsafe. It seems to me to be one step towards those evils to which the plan of consociation, and the establishment of permanent and authoritative councils directly lead. I regret to say, that this appears not to be the only particular in which the hearts of some of the children are turned *from* their fathers,—in which some modern Congregationalists (so called) have deviated from those principles of which Cotton Mather speaks, when he says: "*I shall count my country lost, in the loss of the primitive principles, and the primitive practices, upon which it was at first established.*"

I will only add a single remark to this long note. The membership relation of a pastor to his church, has been considered too much in the light of a subjection of the pastor to "impertinent annoyances of weak, or officious and ill-disposed brethren." No pastor, let his relation to his church and people be what it may, can avoid these annoyances. There is, however, another light in which I love to contemplate the relation of a pastor to his church, as a church member, and that is, in the light of a *privilege*. Is it not a privilege to be under the watch and care of a church, which, like the beasts seen by John, is "full of eyes before and behind," which may watch for our *safety*,

and not merely for our *halting?* Has Jesus Christ, condescended to make himself like one of us—to become our *elder brother*—that he might create a new bond of attachment, and encourage greater familiarity with him? and shall we, his servants, put ourselves upon our official dignity, and claim exemption from that brotherly relation to our churches, which, while it will exempt us from the discipline of these churches, will deprive us also of that fellowship and sympathy which should exist among all the members of the body? Surely, if it be a *privilege* for *any one* to be a church member, it is for a pastor. And long may it be, ere it shall be regarded generally, by our churches, as "*the true doctrine*, that a minister, by virtue of his ordination, ceases to be a church member *any where.*" Mitchell, p. 240, note.

No. 8.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES.

The facts and arguments presented in the preceding pages have often suggested to the writer's mind, serious reflections on the duties and responsibilities of Congregational churches. But a desire to compress, as much as possible, the contents of this volume, has deterred him from making those practical, religious applications to his brethren which he desired. With all his zeal for Congregationalism, God is the writer's witness, that he has a higher end in view than the promotion of a party—the triumph of a religious sect or denomination. It would, indeed, rejoice his heart to see Congregationalism—that simple, scriptural form of church order—everywhere flourishing; not, however—if he knows his own heart—that his favorite denomination might become dominant; but that the system of church order which is best adapted to promote the glory of God might have "free course, and be glorified."

The writer avails himself of a few vacant pages in the

last form of the appendix, to introduce an eloquent appeal to the New England churches, from the pen of Rev. Leonard Bacon, of New Haven, Conn. It is extracted from the 8th chapter of his excellent little work, entitled "CHURCH MANUAL."

"*Responsibility of the New England Churches.* My design, then, will be sufficiently understood when I say, that I propose to illustrate the special responsibility of the churches of New England. I wish to show in what peculiar position these churches stand, and what peculiar advantages they enjoy in respect to the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth. The subject, you see at once, is one which a volume could not exhaust, and which therefore can be only imperfectly and rapidly surveyed within these limits.

"Our first remark, then, respecting the responsibility of our churches, is,—they are eminently free—peculiarly exempt from all external restraints upon their activity and usefulness. That is, there is nothing to hinder them from exerting their powers and capabilities to the uttermost. The way is open for them to do all the good they can.

"In most other countries, Christians and churches find themselves shut up and hemmed in on every side, by the jurisdiction of the government over religion and all religious institutions. They find that they can undertake no benevolent enterprise—they cannot set up a college or a theological seminary—they cannot print a tract—they cannot carry on a Sabbath School—they cannot give away a Bible perhaps—without leave first had from an arbitrary and jealous government. But with us the right of every man to use his time, his personal exertions, and his property, as he pleases, for the promotion and diffusion of his own religious principles, for the conversion of his neighbors and of the whole world to his own faith; and the right of every man to associate with others for the prosecution of a common religious or philanthropic enterprise—are reckoned as among the inalienable rights of human nature; and the least infringement on those rights is a declaration of war against the very basis of the social compact.

"But our churches—the primitive and Puritan churches

of New England—have another advantage, which though less vital is of the same sort with the one just described, and is essential to its full enjoyment. Their liberty of doing good, guarded as it is against legal and governmental encroachment, is at the same time unrestrained by ecclesiastical jurisdiction or authority. There are forms and constitutions of what is called church government, under which churches, yes, and individuals, are so carefully guarded against error that they are almost equally guarded against truth, and are so strictly restrained from doing wrong that they have little liberty left of doing right. But with us there are neither canons nor constitutions to prevent improvement and enterprise in active Christianity, or to resist the reformation of prescriptive errors. In our churches, whatever effort seems to promise good, whatever measure experience or common sense shows to be well fitted to promote the conversion of sinners in the congregation, or the revival and increase of piety in the brotherhood—whatever method of operation is effectual to stay the progress of destructive evils, or promote the spread of knowledge and holiness—may be undertaken at once, without asking leave of presbytery or prelate, and without waiting for the tardy approbation of conference or convention. The way is open for every one of all these churches to do all the good it can. If they fail to exert their utmost power for the advancement of the world's salvation, it cannot be said to excuse them, that they were hindered by the interference of civil power, or by the usurpations and the *vis inertiæ* of ecclesiastical legislation.

"Our second remark is, The organization of these churches is such as to call into useful employment every gift of every member. It will not be thought wrong to advert here to the fact that, under some forms of organization, it is for the ordained ministry alone to teach, to exhort, to council, to bear any part in the administration of discipline, or to lead their fellow Christians in any devotional exercises. Under such a system, what is required on the part of church-members is not intelligence, not wisdom to debate and advise in matters of common interest, not the power to stir up the minds of others to zeal and diligence in the work of God, not the gift of leading the

thoughts and desires of others in becoming words to the throne of grace, but instead of all these, a passive obsequiousness to ecclesiastical rulers. Thus a man may be endowed with every gift, yet if he sustain no office, what are his gifts all worth—they must lie dormant. There are other forms of government which do not carry the separation between officers and laity in the church to such an extreme, but which are still encumbered with the same disadvantage in a less degree. There are churches in which a talent for exhortation or for leading in prayer, is readily enough called into exercise, but a talent for counsel, a cool judgment, skill in the adjustment of difficulties, and activity and accuracy in the details of business, are of no use, save as the possessor happens to be invested with some official character. In a church, for example, which puts all its affairs into the hands of a pastor and three or four elders, what is the need of intelligence and wisdom, or of deliberate and independent thought, or of anything but obedience on the part of the brethren. But in the churches of which we now speak, as all affairs are left in the hands of the brotherhood, so every member of the brotherhood is sure to have calls enough for the exercise of whatever gifts he possesses. Nay so much depends on the diligence, the faithfulness, and the wisdom of the brethren, so obvious is the necessity for an intelligent and efficient laity, that nothing can tend, more effectually than this constant demand, to secure a constant supply of the requisite activity and knowledge. As the result, it may be stated without boasting, that so numerous a body of churches, better instructed in respect to the great doctrines of the Christian faith, or better prepared and trained for active usefulness in the kingdom of God, cannot be found in all the world. Thus these churches are all, save here and there a case of lamentable delinquency, so many schools for the cultivation and employment of all those gifts by which believers can benefit each other, or promote the kingdom of God. Thus the churches of New England may naturally be expected to embody, always, a great amount of disciplined and practiced moral power—power which may be wielded to vast effect for the universal advancement of the cause of holiness.

"Thirdly, the power and of course the responsibility of these churches is augmented by their mutual communion and intercourse. While they acknowledge no common authority over them, other than the authority of common sense and of the word of God; they are not, as is sometimes thought, so many independent and isolated bodies, with no bond of union, and no perception of common interests and duties. All the acts of the communion of churches, are mutually rendered at least as truly and faithfully, as in any other community of churches whatever. They are really and truly united—one spirit circulates through the whole communion—the prosperity of one portion is felt by all—the zeal of one tends to awaken every other—opinion, thought, feeling, pass from one to another with no obstruction. What facilities does this afford for the exertion of a combined and resistless moral influence. What responsibility does it throw upon these churches.

"Fourthly, these churches are blessed with a ministry, evangelical, enlightened, and united. A few indeed of the churches built by our fathers, on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone, have departed from the faith and have ceased to be numbered among the churches. We speak not of them but of the thousand that remain, and that acknowledge each other as the depositaries of the precious faith which has made New England what it is; and we say that these churches are blessed with a ministry eminently evangelical. Hardly a pulpit can be found, in which the great doctrines of the gospel are not exhibited with a clearness and consistency not often known in other countries. Among the thousand Congregational pastors of New England, how rarely can one be found, who preaches either an antinomian or an Arminian gospel—who either covers up the obligations of the sinner, or obscures and hides the sovereignty of the Creator,—who either extenuates man's guilt and administers opiates to his slumbering conscience, by denying his ability as an agent, or neglects to teach him his dependence on the Lord Jesus alone, for righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. How rarely can one be found, to whose ministry God does not set the seal of his approbation, in the conversion and sanctification of souls.

"At the same time, the pastors of these churches, to a greater extent than can be affirmed of any equal body of churches in the world, are enlightened and well instructed. While we are tied up by no rules which forbid the calling of any man to the pastoral office, whom God has endowed with such gifts and graces as give good promise of success, yet, such is the force of public opinion, so favorable are the arrangements of God's providence, that hardly any are set to feed the flock of God, whose minds are not cultivated and disciplined by general study, and none at all who have not given serious attention, to gain a thorough, comprehensive and consistent knowledge of the system of truth contained in the Bible. Theology is more studied, and from the beginning has been more studied, in New England than any where else in the world. The result is that the divines of New England, the Edwardses, and Bellamys, and Dwights of former days, not to mention the names of others who adorn and enlighten the present generation, are at this hour giving lessons in the knowledge of the word of God to the churches of all protestant christendom.

"There is a reason for this. The very constitution of these churches is such that they cannot live without an enlightened and able ministry. If other churches have their imposing liturgies and magnificent ceremonies, their towering hierarchies, their sacerdotal garments, their ministers whose mysterious functions open and shut the kingdom of heaven; it is not so with these. If other churches have their strong systems of ecclesiastical government, putting every thing into the hands of a combined and associated clergy, and making the power of that clergy so strong that the people cannot resist it without convulsive revolution; it is not so with these. In these churches the minister has no power but the power which grows out of the confidence of the people in his personal character, and the power of the truth which he preaches; and therefore if he is to be any thing, he must be not only a man of unimpeachable integrity and purity, but a man of intelligence, and especially of intelligence on the subject of theology. Such, to a happy extent, are the pastors of these churches.

"Nor is this all; the ministers of the New England

churches are, and with few exceptions always have been, eminently harmonious in their views, and united in action. Freedom of thought they have always held to be their privilege as men, and their duty as teachers of religion; and of course they have always entertained some diversity of views, respecting various explanations and defences of the principles of their common faith. Often there has been controversy among them; and sometimes controversy has waxed warm, and in its style and spirit has shown that good men are compassed about with infirmity. Yet as there has been no ecclesiastical power to stimulate the zeal of factions, and no mitred dignity to waken clerical ambition; so, however individuals may have been affected, these debates have generated no distinct and permanent parties which could not give each other the right hand of Christian fellowship, none which could not render to each other all the offices of Christian brotherhood, none which could not labor side by side in love, none which could not stand shoulder to shoulder in the onset against error and sin.

"With such a ministry to teach them, and to lead them on in works of Christian zeal, what may not these churches accomplish, if pastors and people will remember their responsibility, and be faithful to their trust.

"Fifthly; the responsibility of these churches will appear in a strong light, if we consider the relations in which they stand as *the churches of New England*, and the advantages which such a location and connection gives them.

"They are *the* churches of New England. Other churches there are on the same soil, accepted of God and honored of men. But these churches are more in number than all the others put together; they have greater resources than all the others; they are coeval with the country; their history is the history of all that makes the heart of a New Englander beat high with emotion; all the peculiar institutions of New England were planted simultaneously with them, have grown up and flourished with them, and are inseparably intertwined with them, from the root to the topmost branches. Other churches there are, which do not dishonor their name; but to these churches, not less than to all the others, do men look as the keepers and guardians of the truth, as the protectors of morality, as the supporters

of all good institutions, and as the great security for whatever is worth keeping in the venerable puritan character of New England.

"What then is New England, and what is its position in respect to this country and in respect to the world? First, it is a region, the population of which, compactly settled, distinguished by general intelligence, industry, sobriety and enterprise, and trained for successive generations in a reverence for the Bible, and for the institutions of the Christian religion, presents the fairest field for a more complete and glorious triumph of the gospel over an entire people, than has ever yet been witnessed. Next, New England is even yet the great nursery of the nation; —from these green hills and quiet vales, from these busy cities and resounding shores, proceeds that stream of emigration which is spreading life, civilization, wealth and power over the whole continent. Next, it is the chief fountain of intelligence and thought for the whole nation. Where is it that every citizen can read and write? Where are the great places of resort for education, from every State and district in the Union? Whither do schools and infant institutions of learning, all over the land, look for teachers? Where and by whom, are one half of the books read by the American people, manufactured? Who are the professional men of every part of the country, and where were they trained for their employments and their influence? Again, New England is the great source of moral influence for the nation. Who are they that form churches on the frontiers, and are foremost among the settlers of the wilderness in building houses of worship, and setting up Sabbath Schools, and securing the ordinances of religion? Whence flow the streams of the water of salvation that make the desolate places rejoice? Yet once more, In New England are the main resources of almost every institution and enterprise in the country, which aims at the renovation of the world. Who are they that go forth with adventurous feet into every clime, publishing the word of God? Who are they that toil among the heathen, or endure bonds and imprisonment for the gospel of Christ and the liberties of man, or have lain down prematurely in the graves of martyrs far away from their fathers' sepul-

chres? How many of them all are the sons of New England? Where are the resources, whence the contributions, by which such efforts are sustained? How soon would every enterprise which looks beyond the limits of our own country faint and languish if New England were blotted out, or if these churches should utterly abandon their duty?

"Sixthly, The character of the age affords these churches incalculable advantages and facilities for the accomplishment of great results. The times are times of change and revolution every where. In this country the generation now coming upon the stage is to decide in a great measure the destinies of all posterity. The world itself seems agitated, tremulous, half dissolved, and ready to take, under whatever influences may be applied, some new shape and impress. * * * And have not the churches of New England much to do in such times as these?

"Seventhly, These churches have always been eminently blessed by the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

* * * * * *

"How much then, in view of all these particulars, is depending on the continued and increasing purity, diligence, holiness and zeal of the New England churches. If these churches should prove recreant and reprobate—if they should become cold, worldly, corrupt—if through their sloth darkness should come in to cover the land consecrated by the prayers, and rich with the "garnered dust," of the puritans—O what hopes on which the minds of angels are now intent, would be blasted. But if these churches are faithful to their Savior, faithful to themselves, and faithful to those great interests of the human race which are committed, as it were, to their keeping—how may they spread the triumphs of the gospel—how may they hold up the light of God's salvation till its beams shall flash broad and bright over the nations of a dying world."

END.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper proces
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: April 2006

PreservationTechnologie
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATIO
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

BX
7231

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 017 524 639 3